Syriac Hagiography

Texts and Beyond

Edited by

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CHAPTER 6

The Syriac *Life of Mār Yāret the Alexandrian*: Promoting the Cult of a Monastic Holy Man in Early Medieval Mesopotamia

Sergey Minov

Hagiographical writings preserved in Syriac constitute a considerable and diverse corpus that offers a rich trove of information for students of late antique and medieval Middle East.[1] However, as Sebastian Brock pointed out more than a decade ago,[2] this body of literature is somewhat neglected by scholars. While several significant contributions to this field of Syriac studies have been made since the time of that remarque, there are still several subsets of texts within Syriac hagiographical corpus that remain understudied.

One such overlooked group of texts is the corpus of monastic hagiographical works related in one way or another to the figure of Awgēn. At the center of this corpus stands the *Life of Mār Awgēn*. This hagiographical composition, written originally in Syriac, describes the life and deeds of Awgēn (a shortened Syriac form of the Greek name "Eugenios"), a semi-legendary founder of monasticism in Northern Mesopotamia.[3] Allegedly active during the fourth century, Awgēn is said to be born and begin his monastic career in Egypt, but soon relocates to Mesopotamia, accompanied by a group of 70 disciples, and settles in the vicinity of Nisibis. Unfortunately, so far, this composition has received far less scholarly attention than it deserves.[4] For the time being, the most thorough and

1 For an overview, see S.P. Brock, "Syriac Hagiography," in *ARCBH* 1:259–283; A. Binggeli, ed., *L'hagiographie syriaque* (Études syriaques 9; Paris: Paul Geuthner, 2012). A useful online resource is *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Syriaca Electronica*, accessible at http://syriaca.org/saints/index.html.

2 S.P. Brock, "Saints in Syriac: A Little-Tapped Resource," *JECS* 16.2 (2008): 181–196, here 181.

3 For Syriac text, see *AMS* 3:376–479. For an English translation of Bedjan's text, see E. Aydin and A. Garis, *Das Leben des Heiligen Augin / The Life of St. Augin* (Die Werke der Heiligen und Märtyrer; Glane: Bar Hebraeus Verlag, 2012).

4 A critical edition of Awgēn's *Life* is a long overdue desideratum. The only substantial discussion of its textual tradition and date is A.P. Dyakonov, "Къ исторіи сирійскаго сказанія о св. Мар-Евгенѣ," *Христіанскій Востокъ* 6.2 (1918): 107–174. For a discussion of the figure of Awgēn and its historicity, see also J.M. Fiey, "Aonès, Awun, et Awgin (Eugène) aux origenes du monachisme mésopotamien," *AB* 80 (1962): 52–81; F. Jullien, "Aux sources du monachisme

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well-argued discussion of its date remains that of Aleksandr Dyakonov, who convincingly argued that a version of the *Life of Mār Awgēn* was in existence no later than the sixth century.[5]

Since no other ancient source confirms his existence, most scholars agree on the ahistorical character of Awgēn as he is represented in his *Life*. It would be a mistake, however, to underestimate the importance of this text as a foundation myth of Syriac monasticism in late antique Northern Mesopotamia. Its influence can be inferred from proliferation from the seventh century on of Syriac hagiographical works that celebrate monastic holy men, whose legitimacy derives from their connection to Awgēn, either as his immediate disciples or as being inspired by his example. In this article, I would like to contribute to our understanding of this aspect of monastic hagiographical creativity in early medieval Mesopotamia by presenting and discussing one of the compositions that comprise the corpus of lives of Awgēn's disciples and followers, the *Life of Mār Yāret the Alexandrian* (hereafter referred to as the *Life*).

The *Life* is a hagiographical composition written in Syriac and devoted to the life and accomplishments of a monastic holy man, who was supposedly active in the region of Bēt ʿArbāyē in Northern Mesopotamia. Until recently, this work has received almost no attention from scholars interested in the history of Syriac monasticism. One of the reasons for such neglect is that the original Syriac text of the *Life* is still unpublished, and no translations of it into any European language exists so far.[6] So far, students of Syriac literature could become familiar with its content mostly through a brief French paraphrase, accompanied by several excerpts in Syriac, made more than a century ago by François Nau.[7] In addition to that, an English paraphrase of the *Life* has been provided by Dale Johnson in his account of the Syriac monasticism on Mount Izla in Ṭūr

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oriental: Abraham de Kashkar et le développement de la légende de Mar Awgin," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 225.1 (2008): 37–52.

5 See Dyakonov, "Къ исторіи сирійскаго сказанія," 132–143.

6 Among translations of the *Life* into modern languages, one should mention the Arabic one, made by Addai Scher. See A. Scher, *Kitāb sīrat ʾašhar šuhadāʾ al-Mašriq al-qiddisīn*. 2 vols. (Mossoul: Imprimerie des pères dominicains, 1900–1906), 2:265–275. This translation was carried out based on one of the manuscripts of the *Life* kept in the church of Notre Dame des Semences in Alqosh, according to J.M. Fiey, *Nisibe, métropole syriaque orientale et ses suffragants des origines à nos jours* (CSCO 388, Subs. 54; Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1977), 171, n. 53.

7 F. Nau, "Résumé de monographies syriaques: Barṣauma, Abraham de la Haute Montagne, Siméon de Kefar ʿAbdin, Yaret l'Alexandrin, Jacques le reclus, Romanus, Talia, Asia, Pantaléon, Candida, Sergis et Abraham de Cašcar," *ROC* II, 8 [18] (1913): 270–276, 379–389; 9 [19] (1914): 113–134, 278–289, 414–440; 10 [20] (1915–1917): 3–32, here 432–440.

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'Abdīn.[8] The present author has recently published the Syriac text and English translation of Sections 10–13 of the *Life*, containing the account of a conflict between Yāret and the Jews in the city of Nisibis.[9]

In what concerns the textual tradition of the *Life* in Syriac, its text appears in no less than fifteen manuscripts,[10] the earliest two of which were produced during the last decades of the twelfth century by West Syrian scribes: Damascus, Patriarcat syr. 12/17 (1178/79), and BL Add. 12174 (1197). There also exists a Christian Arabic version of the *Life*, one specimen of which is preserved in the library of St Mark's monastery in Jerusalem.[11] There can be little doubt that it was translated into Arabic from Syriac.

At present, I am preparing a critical edition of the Syriac version of the *Life*. While this work is still in progress, I would like nevertheless to make its text available to scholars, to facilitate research into this work, as well as into the hagiographical corpus related to Awgēn. In the following discussion of the *Life*, I rely upon the preliminary edition of its Syriac text, based on its two oldest manuscripts, which I provide in Appendix, together with an English translation.

In what follows, I am going to provide an overview of the content of the *Life*, which will be accompanied by a close examination of the narrative's intertextual background and analysis of its monastic agenda. At the conclusion, I will offer some preliminary observations on possible date and milieu of the work, as well as a concise survey of what is known about the development of the saint's cult.

1 Narrative Outline of the *Life*

The overall narrative of the *Life* could be divided into four main parts: (1) description of the childhood and of the beginning of Yāret's monastic career in Egypt; (2) account of the journey of the young monk Yāret to Mesopotamia;

8 D.A. Johnson, *Monks of Mount Izla: Origins of Monasticism in Upper Mesopotamia in the 4th–6th Centuries* (United States of America: [the author], 2004), 126–134.

9 S. Minov, "Jews and Christians in Late Sasanian Nisibis: The Evidence of the *Life of Mār Yāreth the Alexandrian*," in *Irano-Judaica VII: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages*, ed. by J. Rubanovich and G. Herman (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2019), 473–505.

10 See Appendix for the list.

11 Jerusalem, Saint Mark's Monastery 199 A, fols. 356^{v}–362^{r}. For a description, see W.F. Macomber, *Final Inventory of the Microfilmed Manuscripts of the St. Mark's Convent Jerusalem* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, Harold B. Lee Library, 1995), Roll 3, Item 2, #43.

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(3) time spent by the holy man in the monastery of Mār Awgēn; (4) Yāret's move to and conversion of the village of Ragūlū, where the holy man stays until his death.

In the first part (Sections 1–6), we are told that the future saint was born to a pious couple of Christians, Yustus and Prisqilla, who lived in Alexandria in Egypt. After he studied for eight years in the "school of Alexandria," where he exhibited a strong predilection for asceticism by fasting, praying and performing charitable deeds, the young man meets a monk from the monastery of Pachomius and, as a result, decides to pursue a monastic way of life there. He leaves his parents and departs for the monastery, headed by the abbot John the Palestinian, where he stays for three years. At some point, he hears from the elder named Antony the story of Awgēn, a famous ascetic who was also once a member of this monastic community but left Egypt to become the founder of coenobitic monasticism in Persia. Inspired by this story, Yāret asks the abbot for permission to leave the monastery. When the abbot consents, Yāret takes part in the liturgy for the last time and, having said farewell to the brothers, leaves the monastery, heading for the East.

The second part (Sections 7–13) describes Yāret's journey from Egypt to Northern Mesopotamia. The saint passes through such cities of the Roman-Persian frontier as Ḥarran, Dara, Ḥesnā d-Sargā, and Nisibis. In each of them, he performs miracles: in Ḥarran, he stops the outbreak of the plague that was killing local children; in Dara, he expels demons from a possessed woman; in Ḥesnā d-Sargā, he rebukes a promiscuous woman, demonstrating his ability to know "hidden things"; in Nisibis, he gains the upper hand in conflict with the local Jews by healing the son of the Persian governor of the city from leprosy, and resurrecting the son of the head of the synagogue.

The third part (Sections 14–20) describes the time spent by Yāret in the monastic community, founded by Mār Awgēn on Mount Izla, where he confirms his status of holy man by performing miracles. Upon his arrival from Nisibis to the monastery, Yāret enters the church where the relics of its founder Awgēn are kept and prays there. He is discovered and recognized by the sacristan Išoʿdad the Arabian, who has a vision of an angel with a fiery rod standing above the holy man. After Yāret confirms his identity to the sacristan, he expels demons from the demoniacs gathered in the church. He is then welcomed by the rest of the monks, who provide him with a cell to stay and appoint a monk named Quryaqos to help him. Summoned by the inhabitants of the nearby village of Maʿare, Yāret faces and defeats the local witch, named Saydū. He undertakes, in the company of Quryaqos, a pilgrimage to the mountain, where Noah's ark rested after the flood. After that, Yāret and his disciple visit the monastery of Mār Aḥa. On their way there, the saint resurrects a man, killed by a lioness.

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During their stay in the monastery, Yāret kills the "great dragon," who was troubling the monks.

The fourth part (Sections 21–27) is focused on the village of Ragūlū, the last stage in the life-journey of the holy man. After Yāret and Quryaqos leave the monastery of Mār Aḥa, they go to this village, located in the region of Bēt ʿArbāyē, to convert its inhabitants to Christianity. On their way there, they cross the river Tigris miraculously, walking over its waters, and evade the robbers at the mountain of Pardūn, protected by God. When they arrive at the village, Yāret destroys by the power of his prayer the local pagan shrine, causing the death of its priests. Enraged, the villagers throw Yāret and Quryaqos into a fiery furnace, but God saves them. After the holy man resurrects the dead pagan priests, the villagers convert into Christianity and build a large monastery on the place of the destroyed idol temple. Yāret and his disciple stay in the village, where the holy man caters to the needs of the local people: he mediates conflicts between villagers, heals the sick, and expels demons. As his life nears its end, Yāret receives a foreknowledge of his imminent death. He then summons local elders to confer his blessing on them and the whole village and to give his last instructions regarding the monastery. After the holy man dies in peace, he is mourned greatly by the villagers, who deposit his body in the monastery's church. Yāret's disciple Quryaqos dies soon afterward, and his body is laid next to his master's. Yet, the holy man continues to serve the people even after his death, as God's "hidden power" that dwells in his bones continues to expel demons and heal the sick.

2 Intertextual Profile of the *Life*

Although the narrative of the *Life* contains no explicit references to or quotations from other texts, be that hagiography or works of different genres, one can hardly imagine that it was produced in a literary vacuum. Indeed, a close reading of the work reveals at once that its author relied on other literary compositions. Analyzing the *Life* against the background of the previous tradition of Syriac literature, translated as well as original, one can distinguish several layers of intertextual connections operative in this work.

Given the Christian identity of the *Life*'s author, it is hardly surprising to discover an intertextual layer relating to canonical writings of the Bible, both of the Old and New Testament. An example of the former can be found in Section 20, where the holy man faces the "great dragon" that was troubling monks of the monastery of Mār Aḥā. He addresses the monster with the following words: "By that word, which bound you in Eden, and made you creep upon the

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ground, and gave you dust as your nourishment for all the days of your life …," which are a rephrasing of God's curse against the serpent in Genesis 3:14. On another occasion, in Section 23, we see how during the conflict with pagans, which takes place in the village of Ragūlū, Yāret and his disciple miraculously survive when the villagers throw them into the fiery furnace. This miracle is modelled after that of the three Hebrew youths of Babylon from Chapter 3 of the Book of Daniel, who were saved by God after having been thrown into a fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan king of Babylon.[12]

When it comes to the New Testament corpus, of especial importance for the author of the *Life* are miracle narratives of the canonical Gospels. On the one hand, one comes across several explicit references to miracles performed by Jesus. For instance, in Section 13, when the holy man prays to Jesus to resurrect the dead son of the leader of the synagogue, he evokes two resurrection miracles performed by Jesus, that of Lazarus (Jn 11:1–44), and that of the daughter of Jairus (Mk 5:22–43, Lk 8:41–56).

In addition to that, there are cases, typologically similar to that of the miracle of the fiery furnace mentioned above, when our author models miracles performed by Yāret after those of Jesus. Section 8 relates the story of a miracle performed by the holy man during his visit to the city of Dara. We are told that when Yāret approached the city gate, he met there a woman who was tormented by the "seven demons" and who attacked random passers-by throwing stones at them. Not afraid of her violent outbursts, Yāret approached the woman, unharmed by the stones she was throwing at him and expelled the demons that were possessing her. As they were leaving the woman's body "in the form of hideous Ethiopians," a standard description of demons in late antique literature,[13] the demons bewailed their fate, addressing Jesus, by whose

12 On the great popularity that these biblical figures enjoyed among Syriac Christians, see E. Vergani, *La verità nella fornace: l'esegesi di Dn 3 nella Chiesa siriaca antica* (tesi di dottorato in storia religiosa; Università degli Studi di Bologna, 1996); Ch. Jullien, "Traditions croisées sur les trois enfants dans la fournaise (Dan III)," *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān* 12.1–2 (2014): 135–152; R.A. Kitchen, "Three Young Men Redux: The Fiery Furnace in Jacob of Sarug and Narsai," *SP* 78 (2017): 73–84; D. Alibertis, "East Meets East in the Chaldean Furnace: A Comparative Analysis of Romanos's Hymns and Jacob of Serugh's Homily on the Three Children," *JCSSS* 18 (2018): 24–41.

13 See D. Brakke, "Ethiopian Demons: Male Sexuality, the Black-Skinned Other, and the Monastic Self," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10.3–4 (2001): 501–535; D.G. Letsios, *"Diabolus in figura Aethiopis tetri*: Ethiopians as Demons in Hagiographic Sources. Literary Stereotypes versus Social Reality and Historic Events," in *East and West: Essays on Byzantine and Arab Worlds in the Middle Ages*, ed. by J.P. Monferrer-Sala, V. Christides and T. Papadopoullos (Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies 15; Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2009), 185–200.

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name the saint was able to expel them. A noteworthy detail of the demons' lament is that they identify themselves as "those seven, whom you (i.e., Jesus) had expelled from Mary" (ܫܒܥܐ ܗܢܘܢ ܕܐܦܩܬ ܡܢ ܡܪܝܡ ܥܩܪ ܠܢ).

What we see here is, first of all, a developed allusion to the exorcism performed by Jesus over Mary Magdalene, described in Luke 8:2. The miracle performed by Yāret is modelled after the miracle of Jesus. However, this account is more than an allusion. The holy man here not only repeats successfully the miracle performed by Jesus in an act of *imitatio Christi*, but defeats the same malevolent protagonists who once opposed his master. This narrative strategy collapses the chasm between then and now, establishing a tangible connection between the present time of the Syrian holy man and the formative time of Christian history through the figures of demons, who are not constrained by time and aging.

Another case of intertextual connection to the New Testament appears in the following Section 9. After he left Dara, the holy man arrived at the citadel of Sargā. As he was taking rest in the shadow of its walls, Yāret was approached by a local woman, who began small talk with the stranger, while eyeing him "lasciviously" (ܒܫܠܝ). When the holy man asked her to fetch him water to drink, she feigned being offended, claiming that no man ever saw her or dared to speak to her. In reply to that, Yāret rebuked her by pointing out that she had just spent the night in the company of two young men, and that three others were still waiting for her in her house. Astonished, the woman ran to the citadel and announced the arrival of the holy man to its inhabitants.

This story is clearly modelled on the description of the meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, found in the Gospel of John (4:4–42). In both cases, the male protagonist makes a stop on his journey, during which he asks a local woman for water. In both cases, the woman finds a pretext to refuse the request. Finally, in both cases the man gains the upper hand over the woman by exhibiting knowledge of her private life and makes her acknowledge his superior status: in the Gospel, the Samaritan woman calls Jesus "prophet," whereas in the *Life* the woman announces Mār Yāret to the people of the citadel as "the man who knows hidden things" (ܓܒܪܐ ܕܡܕܥ ܟܣܝܬ).

Moreover, one can recognize the echoes of the New Testament master narrative in the assortment of miracles ascribed to the holy man. Most of them have correspondence in the miracles performed by Jesus in the Gospels and, later on, by his apostles in the Acts. In a similar manner, Yāret heals (the son of the Persian general from leprosy in Section 12), resurrects (the son of the leader of the Jewish community in Section 13, and a man killed by a lion in Section 19), and expels demons (from the woman at Dara in Section 8). It might be noted that within the Syriac hagiographical tradition that developed around the figure of

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Mār Awgēn, this tripartite ministry was explicitly presented as an indication of the continuing legacy of the apostles. Thus, the author of the Syriac *Mēmrā on Mār Awgēn* equates the efficacy of the holy man's prayer with that of the apostles in the following manner: "The prayer of the elder was similar to that of the apostles, for it was healing pains, chasing demons, and resurrecting dead."[14]

The mention of Awgēn brings us to another essential intertextual layer in the *Life*, one relating to the *Life of Mār Awgēn*. As one turns to the narrative of the *Life*, it becomes apparent that the figure of Awgēn plays a crucial role in the development of the monastic career of the holy man, although not in a direct manner, since by the time Yāret reaches Mesopotamia, the legendary monastic leader is already dead.

The name of Awgēn is mentioned for the first time in Section 5. During a stay at the Pachomian monastery in Egypt, the first stop on his life-journey, Yāret is told about Awgēn by a certain monk Antonius, one of the spiritual elders of the monastery, who is said to have the ability of "seeing hidden things." When Yāret visits the elder, Antonius informs the young monk that in the future, he is going to join "the band of the elder Mār Awgēn, the greatest among the athletes." According to Antonius, Awgēn once visited their monastery, from which he embarked on his journey to Northern Mesopotamia, accompanied by some of its monks, together with whom he established "a monastery on the mountain which is called Izla of Bēt Nahrīn, near the city of Nisibis." Inspired by the elder's account of the "amazing deeds" of Awgēn, Yāret asks him for a blessing to follow this path. After Yāret receives Antony's blessing and says farewell to the fellow monks, he sets out on a long journey to the East, following in the footsteps of Awgēn.

The prophecy of Antonius is fulfilled when Yāret arrives at the monastery of Mār Awgēn and joins its community. In Section 14 it is related that after coming out victorious from the conflict with the Jews in Nisibis, the holy man leaves the city and goes up to what some manuscripts describe as "Mountain of the Second Sinai," that is Mount Izla, where he finally reaches "the monastery of the illustrious Mār Awgēn." We are told that at the time of Yāret's arrival, "the illustrious elder has already deceased," and that the monastic community he left behind was "without a head and a leader." Upon his arrival, Yāret visits the church and the martyrion, where he prostrates himself at the reliquary, con-

14 ܐܝܟ ܕܐܝܬ ܐܒܐ ܕܫܡܥܘܢ ܒܪ ܓܠܝܐ ܗܘ ܕܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܐܦ ܠܗܘ ܕܫܠܝܚܐ ܐܝܟ

taining the bones of Awgēn. The holy man remains in the martyrion until the time of the liturgy, after which the sacristan discovers him and recognizes him.

Besides these explicit references to Awgēn as a crucial figure in the development of the monastic career of Yāret, there are additional intertextual threads that suggest that the author of the *Life* was acquainted with the *Life of Mār Awgēn*, and made use of it to build the plot and shape the image of his protagonist. Thus, in Section 5, where Antonius relates the story of Awgēn to the young novice Yāret, the elder brings forward as an example of the holy man's spiritual prowess the miracle, performed by him in the monastery, "when by his prayer he cooled the oven that was raging with fire, and entered and sat inside it as if on the cold ground." A detailed description of the miracle of Awgēn cooling the oven in the monastery of Pachomius does, in fact, appear in the *Life of Mār Awgēn*.[15] Apparently, this miracle was regarded as one of the most impressive feats of Awgēn, as it is often evoked in connection with the holy man. Thus, it is mentioned in the summary of Awgēn's monastic career provided by Dādišōʿ Qaṭrāyā in his *Commentary on the Paradise of the Fathers*,[16] in the *Book of Governors* (6.12) by Thomas of Marga,[17] and some other sources.

Furthermore, several other miracles performed by Yāret, which likewise do not have parallels in the New Testament, are most likely modelled after the miracles found in the *Life of Mār Awgēn*. One of such cases is the miraculous destruction of the idols in the "Magian" (i.e., Zoroastrian) shrine in the village of Ragūlū, described in Section 22. A similar story is told in the *Life of Mār Awgēn*, where the holy man comes to a pagan temple in the region of Bēt ʿArbāyē and the local idol falls and shatters in his presence.[18] In the *Mēmrā on Mār Awgēn* mentioned above, the holy man is extolled as champion over "paganism" (ܥܒܕܬܐ), whereas his disciples are praised as vanquishers of idolatry in Mesopotamia: "They spread through our land as messengers sowing peace, and rooted out the thorns of idolatry, and sowed truth."[19]

15 Ed. *AMS* 3:383–385.

16 See N. Sims-Williams, "Dādišoʿ Qatrāyā's Commentary on the *Paradise of the Fathers*," *AB* 112.1–2 (1994): 33–64, here 44–45.

17 Ed. E.A.W. Budge, *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas, Bishop of Margâ A.D. 840*. 2 vols. (London: K. Paul Trench Trubner & Co., 1893), 2:635.

18 Ed. *AMS* 3:450.

19 ܐܬܝܢ ܥܒܕܬܐ ܕܟܠ ܐܬܪܐ ܫܕܪܝܢ ܫܠܡܐ ܘܢܨܒܘ ܣܢܝ ܥܒܕܬܐ ܘܙܪܥܘ ܫܪܪܐ; ed. Dyakonov, "Къ исторіи сирійскаго сказанія," 163. Cf. also the *Life of Mār Ḥabīb*; ed. A.P. Dyakonov, "Сирийская легенда о Мар-Хаббибе ученике Мар-Евгена," in *Известия Кавказского историко-археологического института. Том 5* (Тифлис, 1927), 1–42, here 25.

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Similarly, the miracle performed by Yāret when he restores to life one of the monks, who was mauled by a lioness in a forest, described in Section 19, resembles strongly the miracle found in the *Life of Mār Awgēn*, where the holy man resurrects a young boy, killed by a lion in a forest near the river Tigris.[20] This miracle is also celebrated in the *Mēmrā on Mār Awgēn*.[21] Similar miracles are found in the lives of several other holy men from this period and region, arguably, under the influence of the *Life of Mār Awgēn*.[22]

Moreover, the miracle performed by Yāret when the robbers, who attack him and his disciple Quryaqos at the Mountain of Pardūn, are stricken with blindness, described in Section 21, resembles an episode from the *Life of Mār Awgēn*, when the Persian soldiers of King Shapur, who were about to enter the church where the holy man and other monks were hiding, are afflicted by the cloud of darkness, following his prayer.[23]

There are also instances when, even if miracles performed by Yāret do have analogues in the New Testament, closer parallels seem to be found in the *Life of Mār Awgēn*. One of such cases is the miracle of Yāret walking over the waters of the Tigris in the company of his disciple Quryaqos, during their pilgrimage to the site of Noah's ark (Section 18), or on their way to the region of Bēt ʿArbāyē (Section 21). On the one hand, this miracle evokes the Gospels' account of Jesus walking on the sea of Galilee (cf. Mt 14:22–34). A more immediate parallel, however, comes from the *Life of Mār Awgēn*, where the holy man crosses the river near the fortress of Bēt Zabday, accompanied by his disciples.[24] The feat of walking over the Tigris (or other body of water) seems to constitute one of the hallmarks of portraying holy men in the late antique and early medieval Mesopotamia, as it is attested in many other Syriac hagiographical compositions from this period, such as other works comprising the corpus of lives of Awgēn's disciples,[25] the *Life of Rabban Hormizd*,[26] or the composition of Thomas of Marga.[27]

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20 Ed. *AMS* 3:437–440.

21 Ed. Dyakonov, "Къ исторіи сирійскаго сказанія," 164.

22 Cf. *Life of Mār Ḥabib*; ed. Dyakonov, "Сирийская легенда," 24; *Life of Mār Yāwnān* 8.4; ed. *AMS* 1:512–513; Thomas of Marga, *Book of Governors* 4.19; ed. Budge, *Book of Governors*, 2:434.

23 Ed. *AMS* 3:454–456. Cf. also a similar miracle in the *Life of John the Arab*; see S.P. Brock, "Notes on Some Monasteries on Mount Izla," *Abr-Nahrain* 19 (1980–1981): 1–19, here 9.

24 Ed. *AMS* 3:448–449.

25 Cf. *Life of Mār Ḥabib*; ed. Dyakonov, "Сирийская легенда," 21–22; *Life of John the Arab*; see Brock, "Notes on Some Monasteries," 9.

26 Ed. E.A.W. Budge, *The Histories of Rabban Hôrmîzd the Persian and Rabban Bar-ʿIdtâ*. 3 vols. (Luzac's Semitic Text and Translation Series 9–11; London: Luzac and Co., 1902), 11.1:154.

27 Cf. *Book of Governors* 4.25, 5.17, 6.15; ed. Budge, *Book of Governors*, 2:464, 565, 648, 650.

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The examples of a close intertextual relationship between the *Life of Mār Yāret* and the *Life of Mār Awgēn* are not limited to the representation of the saint's miracles. Several other narrative elements of the former find antecedents in the latter. Thus, in Section 16, we are told that during Yāret's sojourn at the monastery founded by Awgēn, the holy man would keep vigils during the night, while during the day, he would "carry around a pitcher on his shoulder and give water to drink to wayfarers." It is hardly a coincidence that the author of the *Life* makes his protagonist engage in this charitable practice after he joins the monastic community, whose founder himself introduced it when he installed three hundred "pitchers" (ܩܠܐ) alongside the roads and started to fill them regularly with water for the sake of wayfarers, according to the *Life of Mār Awgēn*.[28]

Another intertextual connection with the *Life of Mār Awgēn* can be found in Section 18 that describes the pilgrimage of Yāret and his disciple Quryaqos to the place where Noah's ark landed after the flood, referred to as the "Mountain of the House of the Ark" (ܛܘܪܐ ܕܒܝܬ ܐܪܟܐ). The tradition of Christian pilgrimage to the site of Noah's ark in the mountains of Corduene goes back at least to the fifth century, as shows the testimony of the Armenian historiographer Pseudo-Faustus of Byzantium, according to whom Jacob, the bishop of Nisibis, travels to Mount Sararad in the district of Korduk' in order to see "the redeeming ark built by Noah" and pray there.[29] In what concerns Syriac literature, the *Life of Mār Awgēn* is the earliest source that bears witness to

28 Ed. *AMS* 3:390–391.

29 *Epic Histories* III.10; trans. N.G. Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand* (*Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk'*) (Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies 8; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 77–80. For a discussion of Armenian and Syriac traditions regarding the place of the ark's location, see E. Nestle, "Die Auffindung der Arche Noä durch Jakob von Nisibis," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 26.2 (1905): 241–243; M. Thierry, "Le lieu d'échouage de l'arche de Noé dans la tradition arménienne," *Syria* 72.1–2 (1995): 143–158; M.E. Stone, "Mount Ararat and the Ark," in *Noah and His Books*, ed. by M.E. Stone, A. Amihay and R.A. Clements (SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature 28; Atlanta, Georgia: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 307–316; M. Lang, "Utopie und mythische Geographie—Mesopotamisches Erbe in der syrisch-patristischen Tradition am Beispiel des Paradiesesberges und des Landungsplatzes der Arche," in *Akten des 5. Symposiums zur Sprache, Geschichte, Theologie und Gegenwartslage der syrischen Kirchen* (*v. Deutsche Syrologentagung*), *Berlin 14.–15. Juli 2006*, ed. by R.M. Voigt (Semitica et Semitohamitica Berolinensia 9; Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2010), 137–153; A. Drost-Abgarjan, "Ararat versus Qardu: Noahs Berg in der armenischen und syrischen Überlieferung," in *Akten des 5. Symposiums zur Sprache, Geschichte, Theologie und Gegenwartslage der syrischen Kirchen* (*v. Deutsche Syrologentagung*), *Berlin 14.–15. Juli 2006*, ed. by R.M. Voigt (Semitica et Semitohamitica Berolinensia 9; Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2010), 11–24.

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the importance of this holy place as a destination for monastic pilgrimage.[30] Similarly to Pseudo-Faustus, the primary focus of the pilgrimage narrative in this work is on the figure of Jacob of Nisibis, who tries to persuade Awgēn to accompany him in the quest for the relic of Noah's ark. Although the holy man declines the request, he assures the bishop of his future success. Embarked on the journey alone, Jacob reaches Mount Qardu, where, assisted by an angel, he discovers a fragment of the ark and establishes a monastery at the location. The bishop brings this relic as a gift to Awgēn, who makes from it a cross for his cell. The holy man does eventually visit the place of the ark, agreeing to Jacob's request to take part in the ceremony of consecration of the newly built monastery. The author of the *Life* reworks the motif of pilgrimage to the site of Noah's ark from the *Life of Mār Awgēn*, adjusting it to his own needs, as did some other hagiographers of the lives of Awgēn's disciples.[31]

Finally, in the concluding Section 27, we are told that, when the end of the holy man's life drew near, Yāret "knew in his soul that the time of his departure had arrived," and summoned all monks of his community to instruct them for the last time and to bless them. Although such motifs in descriptions of a saint's final moments belong to the stock of the most common *topoi* of monastic hagiography,[32] it should be pointed out, for the sake of completeness, that in that respect the *Life* also stands close to the account of the departure of the saint in the *Life of Mār Awgēn*, who likewise is said to have a foreknowledge of the time of his death, and gathered his disciples for last instruction and blessing.[33]

The discussed examples demonstrate that the New Testament and, notably, the *Life of Mār Awgēn* served as two major sources of inspiration for the author of the *Life*. In what concerns the latter, he not only explicitly places the figure of Awgēn at the crucial moment in the unfolding of the monastic career of Yāret but makes the whole life of his hero mirror that of Awgēn to a considerable degree.

30 Ed. *AMS* 3:435–449.

31 Cf. *Life of Mār Šalīṭā*; ed. *AMS* 1:435–437. The mountain of Noah's ark is mentioned in passing in the *Acts of Mār Qardagh*; see J.T. Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Transformation of the Classical Heritage 40; Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2006), 53.

32 It appears already in Athanasius' *Life of Antony* 89; PG 26:968. For additional examples from the Byzantine tradition of monastic hagiography, see Th. Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos: Griechische Heiligenviten in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit* (Millennium-Studien 6; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 320–327.

33 Ed. *AMS* 3:474–477.

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There is more work to be done, however, on possible sources used by our author, as one comes across some intertextual connections in the *Life* that, at the present moment, are difficult to explain. One such case is the story of a conflict between Yāret and the sorceress Saydū that takes place in the village of Maʿare,[34] described in detail in Section 17. A similar account of the triumph of a monastic holy man over the witches in the same village of Maʿare appears in the *Life of Abbā Sallārā*, another Syriac hagiographical work from the corpus of the lives of Awgēn's disciples. Yet, since the text of this composition has not been published yet,[35] nor is there any substantial discussion of its date and provenance,[36] it is difficult to form a well-founded opinion about direction, in which the literary influence between the two works might go.

3 Message and Purpose of the *Life*

As one might expect, an account of the life and achievements of a monk, the *Life* reflects values and concerns of a monastic milieu. To grasp the rationale behind this work and decode the message that its author strives to convey, one should focus, first and foremost, on its monastic dimension. Besides general conventions of monastic hagiography, in accordance with which Yāret is portrayed as an embodiment of such ascetic virtues as fasting, prayer, weeping, etc., and his career as that of a permanent struggle against demonic and human antagonists, there are several more specific manifestations of monastic background in the *Life*, which allow us to catch a glimpse of the particular milieu, in which this work emerged.

The first step in that direction would be to acknowledge that the Western (in relation to Mesopotamia), and more specifically—Egyptian, background of Yāret is not an accidental fancy of the author, but an integral part of his strategy aimed at affirming his protagonist's status as the holy man, using language and imagery relevant for his audience.

In what one might perceive as a contradiction to his apparently Semitic name, the future saint is said to be of Egyptian origin. In Section 1, his birth

34 On this village, see Fiey, *Nisibe*, 259–261.

35 There is only a detailed outline of its content, provided by Brock, "Notes on Some Monasteries," 12–14.

36 Andrew Palmer dates it around 670, but without offering any developed argumentation. See A. Palmer, "Gegenseitige territoriale Ansprüche der Ost- und Westsyrer im 7./8. Jahrhundert im Lichte des Liber Castitatis und dreier unedierter Heiligenviten," *Oriens Christianus* 97 (2013–2014): 24–44, here 24.

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and upbringing in Alexandria are detailed, while his parents are given distinctively "Western" names, Yustus and Prisqila. To make Yāret's connection to the famous metropolis of Egypt even stronger, the author turns him into a graduate of "the great school of Alexandria" (Section 2). Furthermore, the beginning of his monastic career is also said to take place in Egypt, in "the monastery of Abba Pachomius," where "Antonius the Egyptian" (most likely, a reference to Antony the Great) gives him a blessing to move to Mesopotamia (Section 5). The Egyptian connection of Yāret is further enhanced through his close association with the figure of Awgēn. As has been demonstrated above, the author of the *Life* introduces Awgēn explicitly into his narrative, as well as relies heavily on the *Life of Mār Awgēn* in his modelling of Yāret's monastic career. In doing so, he strengthens credentials of his protagonist by grafting him firmly onto the tradition that developed around this key figure in the foundational myth of implanting the Egyptian tradition of monasticism in the Syrian soil, that became an integral part of the self-image of Syriac monasticism in Northern Mesopotamia from the sixth century on.

These aspects of the representation of Yāret in the *Life* bear witness to the lasting cultural and spiritual prestige exercised by the monastic past of Egypt over the tradition of Syriac monasticism in Northern Mesopotamia. This influence was fueled not only by dissemination in Syriac of many foundational texts of Egyptian monasticism, such as works of Athanasius of Alexandria, Ammonas, Evagrius, or *Apophthegmata Patrum*, *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, and *Historia Lausiaca* of Palladius but also by real-life contacts, resulting from short- or long-term visits of Syriac monks to the monastic centers in Egypt via pilgrimage routes during the sixth and seventh centuries. One might recall in that regard the formative journey to the Roman empire of the future catholicos Mār Abā I (ob. 552), which included a visit to the "desert of Egypt," according to the *Life of Mār Abā*.[37] Another noteworthy case is that of ʿEnānīšōʿ, the seventh-century East Syrian monk from Adiabene, who spent some time in the desert of Scetis, and, later on, carried out a massive project of translation into Syriac of several major works of Egyptian monastic hagiography.[38] These

37 Ed. F. Jullien, *Histoire de Mār Abba, catholicos de l'Orient. Martyres de Mār Grigor, général en chef du roi Khusro 1er et de Mār Yazd-panāh, juge et gouverneur*. 2 vols. (CSCO 658–659, Syr. 254–255; Louvain: Peeters, 2015), 9–10 [Syr.], 10–11 [trans.].

38 See Thomas of Marga, *Book of Governors* 2.11; ed. Budge, *Book of Governors*, 2:175. ʿEnānīšōʿ's compendium, which comprises *Historia* of Palladius, *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, and *Apophthegmata Patrum*, enjoyed a considerable popularity among East Syrians; for the Syriac text and English translation, see E.A.W. Budge, *The Book of Paradise, Being the Histories and Sayings of the Monks and Ascetics of the Egyptian Desert by Palladius,*

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were not exceptional cases of monastic mobility between Mesopotamia and Egypt. Išōʿdnaḥ of Baṣra, an East Syrian writer from the ninth century, mentions several East Syrian ascetics from Mesopotamia, who travelled to Egypt during the sixth and seventh centuries. Some of them, like John of Qanqal and Ganī from Kaškar, embarked on a pilgrimage tour to Palestine, including a visit to the desert of Scetis.[39] Likewise, Abraham of Natpar, who was a native of the village of Bēt Natparā in Adiabene, went to Egypt and spent some time in "the monastery of Abba Pachomios," after which he returned to Mesopotamia.[40]

The emergence in the sixth century of the myth of Awgēn's arrival to the region of Nisibis, in which the Egyptian pedigree of Mesopotamian monasticism is projected back to the axial time of the fourth century, represents a high point in the process of maturation of this fascination with Egypt among Syriac Christians. The subsequent appearance during the seventh century and later of hagiographical works such as the *Life* and several other monastic *vitae*, whose protagonists are associated with Awgēn in one way or another,[41] constitutes a secondary stage in the evolution of this myth of monastic origins.

Speaking about manifestations of the monastic worldview in the *Life*, one should not pass over the notion of the superiority of monks over laypeople. It comes to the fore in Section 23, at the conclusion of the account of the contest between Yāret and the pagan priests of the village of Ragūlū. The priests, impressed by the miracles performed by the holy man, inquire about his identity. When he tells them that he is a Christian, they refuse to believe him on the ground that those Christians, with whom they are acquainted, are not able to perform such feats. In response to that, Yāret relates that these Christians are "drowned in worldly toils," whereas he belongs to a different category, called "monks" (ܚܝܝܐ), who are "disciples of Christ" (ܬܠܡܝܕ̈ܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ) and to whom Christ grants everything that they ask Him.

In what concerns the monastic matrix of the *Life*, of especial interest are two instances, in which one can recognize echoes of competition between the author's community and other local monastic communities. One of them is

Hieronymus and Others: The Syriac Texts, according to the Recension of ʿAnân-Îshôʿ of Bêth ʿÂbhê, Edited with an English Translation. 2 vols. (Lady Meux Manuscript 6; London: W. Drugulin, 1904).

39 *Book of Chastity* 23, 28; ed. J.B. Chabot, "Le Livre de la chasteté composé par Jésusdenah, évêque de Baçrah," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 16 (1896): 1–80, here 13, 18 [Syr.].

40 *Book of Chastity* 43; ed. Chabot, "Le Livre de la chasteté," 26–27 [Syr.].

41 In addition to the *Life*, one could mention Lives of Ḥabīb, Šalīṭā, Malkē, Aḥā, Benjamin, Eulogios, Ezekiel of Dāqūq, Pinḥas, and several other texts. A systematic analysis of this hagiographic corpus is another overdue desideratum.

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found in Section 15, describing the arrival of Yāret at the monastery of Mār Awgēn. When the holy man discovers a group of possessed men, chained and locked inside the church, the sacristan Išoʿdad informs him that "we (i.e., monks of the monastery of Mār Awgēn) were not able to heal them." In response to that, Yāret invites him to pray next to the relics of Awgēn, which has an immediate effect, so that demons leave the bodies of their victims at once. A similar dynamic can be observed in Section 20, describing Yāret's visit to the monastery of Mār Aḥā. There the holy man likewise faces a challenge that the local monks are not able to deal with, namely a "great dragon" that scatters the brothers with its breath and prevents them from praying. Once again, Yāret demonstrates his spiritual prowess as he approaches the dragon's lair and kills the monster.

Both these subplots unfold according to the same scenario: Yāret comes out triumphant as he visits a monastic community presented with a challenge, to meet which is beyond their spiritual capacity. In the case of the possessed men, the spiritual power abiding in the relics of Awgēn gets "unlocked" only after the prayer of Yāret, and, apparently, not when the monks of his own monastery would do so; in the case of the dragon, one might expect that the community headed by Mār Aḥā, a monastic leader characterized earlier as "the head of that spiritual band of the followers of the blessed Mār Awgēn" (Section 18), would be able to handle the monster,—yet, it is only the intervention of Yāret that saves the day. What is at stake in both these stories is then the question of who is the true heir of the spiritual legacy of Awgēn, whose figure is present in both narratives, explicitly or implicitly. By drawing a picture of Yāret's spiritual superiority vis-à-vis the two monastic communities that might feel entitled to hold such a claim, the author of the *Life* reclaims for his hero the authority of a true successor to Awgēn's charisma.

In the final analysis, the cultural work performed by the *Life* must be understood against the background of the notion of efficacy, in this particular context—the lasting capacity of the holy man to stand up to the expectations of the audience. Abounding with stories of miracles performed by Yāret, the *Life* bears witness to the saint's power—both during his life and, what is even more important for its audience, after his death. In the concluding Section 27, the author makes the latter point clear, claiming that the holy man "performed more miracles after his death than during his life." As he explains further, the reason for that is that God's "hidden power" (ܚܝܠܐ ܟܡܝܪܐ), i.e., Holy Spirit, continues to dwell and be powerful in the saints' remains even after their bodily demise.[42]

42 The notion of God's power dwelling in saints' earthly remains is well attested among

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These demonstrations of the holy man's efficacy are crucial for understanding socio-religious dynamics behind the literary work as they constitute a rhetorical space, in which the articulate monastic ideology of the *Life*'s author meets the silent outside world of Christian "simple believers," with their mundane concerns for physical well-being and economic prosperity.[43] By carefully enumerating in Section 26 miracles performed by Yāret on behalf of people that come to him from various localities in the region of Bēt ʿArbāyē,[44] the author of the *Life* places the village of Ragūlū firmly at the center of this rural network while claiming for it the prestigious status of a host for the healing shrine.

4 Date and Milieu of the *Life*

As with many other hagiographic works, it is not an easy task to situate the *Life* in time and space with certainty. It is difficult to date this composition precisely since the author not only avoids mentioning any contemporary historical events or figures that might help us anchor his work in time, but builds his narrative on blatant anachronisms. For example, at the beginning of the *Life*, it is related that Yāret was born in the year 503 of the Seleucid era, which would correspond to 192 CE. This date, however, cannot be accepted as trustworthy on internal grounds. Such dating would, for example, make it impossible for the young Yāret to enter a Pachomian monastery since Pachomius established his first monastery in Tabennisi between 318 and 323, when our holy man was supposedly already 126 years old. Furthermore, as a part of his early career, Yāret is said to participate in the conflict between Jews and Christians in Nisibis, which takes place under a Persian military governor of the city. That would be possible

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Syriac Christians of Late Antiquity. Cf. the following statement in the *Canons*, ascribed to Marutha of Maipherqat: "the bones of the saints are (such) in which the living God dwells"; ed. A. Vööbus, *The Canons Ascribed to Mārūtā of Maipherqaṭ and Related Sources*. 2 vols. (CSCO 439–440, Syr. 191–192; Louvain: Peeters, 1982), 105–106 [Syr.], 88 [tr.]. Cf. also reflections of Philoxenus of Mabbug in his *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*; ed. J.W. Watt, *Philoxenus of Mabbug. Fragments of the Commentary on Matthew and Luke*. 2 vols. (CSCO 392–393, Syr. 171–172; Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1978), 48 [Syr.], 41–42 [tr.].

43 On the problem of reconstructing beliefs and practices of this group that comprised a majority of Christians in the late antique and early medieval Middle East, see J. Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018).

44 Eight villages are mentioned explicitly: Bēt Qadeš, Barqayṭā, Tayūmtah, Šapītbā, Bārtā, Bēt Addai, Bēt ʿAmar, and Sūrbād.

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only after 363 CE, when, following the defeat of the emperor Julian, this Roman city was handed over to the Sasanians as a part of the peace treaty made by Jovian. Accordingly, were we to accept the author's date of Yāret's birth, that would make him more than 171 years old at that moment. The situation is complicated further by the fact that there is no literary or archaeological testimony, independent of the *Life*, that would confirm the existence of an ascetic named Yāret, active in the region of Bēt ʿArbāyē during Late Antiquity or the early Middle Ages.

There is thus not much hope that scholars will be ever able to extract the historical Yāret, if he ever existed, from the legendary and highly stereotypical character presented by the author of the *Life*. The only way to move forward, then, is to try to contextualize the text itself, even if it can be dated only approximately and indirectly, by assessing its dependence on other works and analysis of its author's agenda. In what concerns the former, it has been demonstrated above that the author of the *Life* almost certainly knew and made use of the *Life of Mār Awgēn*. That would point to the sixth century as a most likely *terminus post quem* for the work's composition. On the other hand, the earliest surviving manuscripts of the *Life*, dated to the last decades of the twelfth century, provide us with a *terminus ante quem*. Only future research into other works of Awgēn corpus, especially the *Live of Mār Aḥā* and *Life of Abbā Sallārā*, combined with a comprehensive analysis of social and religious dynamics in Northern Mesopotamia during the early Islamic period, may perhaps provide additional information that would help us date the *Life* with greater precision within this broad timespan.

At the present moment, the period from the seventh to eighth centuries seems to constitute the most likely time of the *Life*'s composition. One could adduce several arguments in favor of this dating: it was the time when several other works comprising Awgēn corpus were produced; the absence of concern with Islam in the *Life*, as well as the appearance in the narrative of authentic Iranian names and the stories about conversion of Zoroastrians, might suggest a somewhat earlier date within the proposed period. Although none of these considerations can serve as a definite proof on its own, taken together, they help us formulate an initial working hypothesis for establishing a plausible date of the *Life*.

Determining the geographical provenance of the *Life* seems, however, to be a less challenging task. There is nothing in the Syriac language of this work that might make one suspect that it was not composed originally in this language. Since the central part of the narrative describes activities of Yāret in the region of Bēt ʿArbāyē, with particular focus on the village of Ragūlū, it may be suggested with a high degree of confidence that this work was composed in this

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region and, even more specifically, in this village.[45] An additional support to that can be found in the fact that the *Life*'s author demonstrates an intimate knowledge of this region, as he mentions several rural toponyms and local personal names, most of which are not attested otherwise. At the same time, the author does not exhibit a great literary sophistication or acquaintance with the higher stratum of Syriac Christian culture, as it was cultivated in the school of Nisibis or other prominent centers of learning. It appears, then, that it was a member of local clergy, most likely a monk, who produced the *Life* intending to promote the cause of a local holy man, whose shrine was situated in the village of Ragūlū, and whose fame, apparently, did not spread much beyond the network of neighboring communities.

Finally, a separate problem, which cannot be solved at the present moment, is posed by the question of the confessional milieu, in which the *Life* originated. Answering it is made difficult by the absence in the narrative of the *Life* of any explicit confessional markers, as well as by the fact that the Syriac text of the work was transmitted by both West and East Syrians, and that Yāret was venerated as a saint in both ecclesiastical traditions.

5 The *Life* and the Cult of Yāret

The beginnings of the cult of Yāret are outlined in Section 27, in which we are told that after the holy man's death on October 27, his remains where placed in the church of the monastery, founded by him in the vicinity of the village of Ragūlū. As a result, the church starts to operate as a healing shrine for "all those who were afflicted by the evil spirits." One might assume that the *Life* had some sort of a cultic function and was, for instance, read out during the annual feast of the saint at the shrine hosting his relics. While we do not know whether the efforts of the hagiographer to promote Yāret's shrine as a cultic center had an immediate or lasting effect in the region surrounding the village of Ragūlū, in the long term they paid off to a certain degree, as there is enough evidence demonstrating that the cult of Yāret has succeeded in travelling beyond the local confines and spreading through the region of Ṭūr ʿAbdīn and beyond.

45 Located, apparently, to the east of Nisibis but to the west of the river Tigris. At first, Jean-Maurice Fiey has situated it between the river Sarīa and Tigris, and raised a possibility that it might be identified with the modern village Gerlo, located twenty kilometers southwest of the city of Cizre (medieval Jazīrat Ibn ʿUmar); Fiey, *Nisibe*, 171. Later on, he identified it with the village Šafʿa and located it on the border of ecclesiastical provinces Bēt Zabday and Bēt ʿArbāyē; J.M. Fiey, *Saints syriaques* (Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 6; Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 2004), 191.

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It is difficult to say, however, at which point in time this happened and which factors might have helped this process to gain momentum since there is a considerable gap in our knowledge about the development of the cult of Yāret. So far, we have only sporadic evidence of the saint's veneration, which does not allow us to form a coherent picture of its spread. Thus, the continuing interest in the saint's person could be recognized from a relatively considerable number of manuscripts in which the *Life* is transmitted.[46] The earliest among them come from the West Syrian milieu and are dated by the twelfth century, while the latest was produced during the twentieth century.

As for the evidence on liturgical veneration of the saint, most of it belongs to the late medieval and early modern periods. For example, the commemoration of his death on October 27 is well attested through West Syrian martyrologies and menologies at least from the fourteenth century.[47] From the West Syrian liturgical tradition, we also have the text of a "service" (ܦܠܚܐ) "for Mār Yāret of Alexandria," that was, presumably, performed on the day of the saint's commemoration.[48] Although there seems to be less evidence on liturgical veneration of Yāret in the East Syrian tradition, he was by no means unknown among East Syrians. As a witness to that, one can mention an *ʿōnītā*-hymn in honour of the saint, preserved in ms. Vatican Syr. 89 (16th c.).[49]

In what concerns cultic buildings associated with Yāret, besides the original shrine that hosted his relics, we know about the existence of at least one church dedicated to the saint, although from a much later period. A scribal note and colophon found in ms. 7178 Rich. of the Bodleian Library in Oxford bear witness to the existence of an East Syrian monastery dedicated to Yāret in the village of Dairek in the region of Gāzartā, for whose church this liturgical manuscript was produced in the year 1545, and from where it was snatched by Muslim brigands, who plundered the place in the year 1659.[50]

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46 See Appendix for the list.

47 The earliest testimony so far seems to be that of the so-called *Martyrology of Rabban Sliba* (14th c.); see P. Peeters, "Le martyrologe de Rabban Sliba," *AB* 27 (1908): 129–200, here 141. Cf. also F. Nau, *Martyrologes et ménologes orientaux, I–XIII. Un martyrologie et douze ménologes syriaques édités et traduits* (*PO* 10.1 [46]; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1912), 64, for mss. Vatican Syr. 69 (1547) and Paris syr. 146 (1645), as well as the West Syrian *Book of Life* in ms. Vatican Syr. 39 (1648); S.E. Assemani and J.S. Assemani, *Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae codicum manuscriptorum catalogus. Partis primae, tomus secundus, complectens codices chaldaicos sive syriacos* (Roma: Ex typographia linguarum orientalium, 1758), 279.

48 Cf. ms. Midyat, Monastery of Mor Gabriel 293 (19th c.), fols. 270–295. A digital reproduction of the manuscript is available at the website of HMML project: https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/500662.

49 Assemani and Assemani, *Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae*, 484.

50 See J. Forshall and F. Rosen, *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum orientalium qui in Museo*

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Appendix: Text and Translation of the *Life of Mār Yāret the Alexandrian*[51]

The Syriac text of the *Life* is attested in at least fifteen manuscripts:
- Alqosh, Notre-Dame-des-Semences, 211, cah. 10, fols. 4 ff.[52]
- Alqosh, Notre-Dame-des-Semences, 215, cah. 8, fols. 14 ff.[53]
- Birmingham, University of Birmingham, Mingana Syr. 85 (19th c.; East Syrian), fols. 117^{r}–139^{r}[54]
- Birmingham, University of Birmingham, Mingana Syr. 593 (20th c.; East Syrian), fols. 92^{r}–106^{r}[55]
- Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Add. 2020 (17th c.; East Syrian), fols. 82^{r}–97^{r}[56]
- Damascus, Patriarcat syr. 12/17 (1178/79; West Syrian), fols. 182^{r}–186^{r}[57]
- Dohuk, Diocese Chaldean Duhok, Haddad 39 (1739; East Syrian), fols. 13^{r}–43^{r}[58]

Britannico asservantur. Pars prima: codices syriacos et carshunicos amplectens (London: Curatores Musei Britannici, 1838), 56. For references to other manuscripts, produced for this church, see D. Wilmshurst, *The Ecclesiastical Organisation of the Church of the East, 1318–1913* (CSCO 582, Subs. 104; Louvain: Peeters, 2000), 119.

51 My work on the edition of the *Life* was funded by the Advanced Research Grant "The Cult of Saints" from the European Research Council (Grant 340540).

52 See A. Scher, "Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques conservés dans la bibliothèque du couvent des Chaldéens de Notre-Dame-des-Semences," *Journal asiatique* X, 7 (1906): 479–512; 8 (1906): 55–82, here 61; J.M. Vosté, *Catalogue de la bibliothèque syro-chaldéenne du couvent de Notre-Dame des Semences près d'Alqoš* (*Iraq*) (Rome: Bureaux de l'Angelicum, 1929), 79.

53 See Vosté, *Catalogue de la bibliothèque syro-chaldéenne*, 83.

54 See A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts now in the Possession of the Trustees of the Woodbrooke Settlement, Selly Oak, Birmingham*. 3 vols. (Woodbrooke Catalogues 1–3; Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1933–1939), 1:211–212.

55 See Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection*, 1:1131.

56 See W. Wright, A.A. Bevan, and S.A. Cook, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*. 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), 1:585.

57 See F.Y. Dolabani, R. Lavenant, S.P. Brock, and S.K. Samir, "Catalogue des manuscrits de la bibliothèque du patriarcat Syrien Orthodoxe à Ḥomṣ (auj. à Damas)," *Parole de l'Orient* 19 (1994): 555–661, here 606, 610.

58 The same as ms. Dohuk Church, 52, described in J. Habbi, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in Iraq*. 2 vols. (Publications of the Iraqi Academy, Syriac Corporation, Baghdad; Baghdad: Iraqi Academy Press, 1977–1981) [in Arabic], 2:102. A digital reproduction of the manuscript is available at the website of HMML project: https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/133508.

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– Jerusalem, Saint Mark Monastery, 202 (ca. 16th c.; West Syrian), fols. 99^{r}–127^{v}[59]
– London, British Library, Add. 12174 (1197; West Syrian), fols. 253^{v}–259^{r}[60]
– London, British Library, Or. 9370 (19th c.; East Syrian), fols. 92^{v}–109^{v}[61]
– Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs, 257 (15th c.; West Syrian), fols. 342–347[62]
– Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs, 272 (20th c.; West Syrian), fols. 413–448[63]
– Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, syr. 428 (19th c.; West Syrian), fols. 17^{r}–55^{r}[64]
– Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Borgia sir. 39 (17th c.; East Syrian), fols. 149^{r}–152^{v}, 153^{r}–162^{v}[65]
– Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Sir. 596 (20th c.; East Syrian), fols. 121^{r}–130^{r}[66]

One additional case, that of Baghdad, Chaldean Monastery, 635, fols. 88–105,[67] remains obscure since the cataloguers do not make it clear whether the text of the *Life* in this manuscript is in Syriac or Arabic, written in Garshuni script.

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59 See F.Y. Dolabani and G.Y. Ibrahim, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in St. Mark's Monastery* (*Dairo Dmor Marqos*) (Syriac Patrimony 8; Damascus: Sidawi Printing House, 1994) [in Arabic], 408–409. A digital reproduction is available at the website of HMML project: https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/135655.

60 See W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum, Acquired since the Year 1838*. 3 vols. (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1870–1872), 3:1129.

61 I am grateful to David Taylor for sharing with me his unpublished description of this manuscript.

62 A digital reproduction is available at the website of HMML project: https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/124725.

63 A digital reproduction is available at the website of HMML project: https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/124769.

64 See F. Briquel Chatonnet, *Manuscrits syriaques de la Bibliothèque nationale de France* (*nos 356–435 entrés depuis 1911*), *de la Bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence, de la Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon et de la Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg: catalogue* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1997), 172.

65 See A. Scher, "Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques du Musée Borgia aujourd'hui à la Bibliothèque Vaticane," *Journal asiatique* X, 13 (1909): 249–287, here 259. A digital reproduction is available online: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Borg.sir.39.

66 See A. van Lantschoot, *Inventaire des manuscrits syriaques des fonds Vatican* (*490–631*) *Barberini Oriental et Neofiti* (Studi e Testi 243; Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1965), 128. A digital reproduction is available online: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.sir.596.

67 See P. Haddad and J. Isaac, *Syriac and Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of the Chaldean Monastery Baghdad. Part 1: Syriac Manuscripts* (Publications of the Iraqi Academy, Syriac Corporation, Baghdad; Catalogues of the Syriac Manuscripts in Iraq 3.1; Baghdad: Iraqi Academy Press, 1988) [in Arabic], 301.

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In what follows, a preliminary edition of the *Life*'s Syriac text is offered, followed by an English translation. It is based on the two oldest textual witnesses of the work, mss. Damascus, Patriarcat syr. 12/17 (= D),[68] and British Library, Add. 12174 (= B), both dated by the last decades of the twelfth century. The main text follows that of D, with variant readings of B given in apparatus. The following conventional signs are used:

[…] indicate extended abbreviations;

⟨…⟩ indicate readings damaged irrecoverably in D, but restored based on B.

68 I am grateful to the library of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East for providing me with access to a digital copy of this manuscript.

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ܫܪܟ ܒܗ. ܟܬܒ ܠܗ ܒܝܕ[a] ܡܫܝܚܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܟܠ ܡܠܟܐ ܘܟܠ
ܫܠܝܛܐ ܕܥܠ ܟܠ ܫܠܝܛܐ.

1. ܒܪ ܐܢ ܐܝܬ. ܐܝܟ ܕܠܐ ܡܬܚܫܒ ܒܠܒ ܕܐܢܫ ܕܡܬܚܫܒ ܒܗ
182v ܐܡ ܐܝܬ ܐܡ ܒܪ ܐܢ ܐܝܬ. ܕܡܠܟ ܐܡ ܒܪ ܐܢ ܐܝܬ | ܟܬܒ ܠܗ ܕܠܐ
ܡܫܬܡܫ ܒܗ ܐܡ ܫܠܡ ,ܡܫܬܒܚ[b] ,ܡܫܒܚ. ܐܝܟ ܒܪ
ܠܐ ܕܬܫܬܒܚ ܒܗ ܐܡ ܕܒܝ ܒܗ ܡܫܬܡܫ ,ܐ ܬܐ. ܕܡܢ
ܫܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܠ ܐܡ. ܐܡ ܒܪ ܐܢ ܐܝܬ ܐܡ ܒܪ ܐܢ ܐܝܬ ܐܡ
ܐܡ ,

The account of the amazing heroic deeds of Mār Yāret the Alexandrian, in which his country, birth, and upbringing are made known.

1. In the year 503 of Alexander,[69] the king of the Greeks, there was a man named Yustus in Alexandria. This man was very righteous before the Lord, and he walked in His laws and commandments. And the name of his wife was Prisqila. And his wife also was exceedingly bold in her loving-kindness towards the poor and strangers, who were coming by. A glorious and marvellous scion sprang from this blessed and excellent couple. And when the son, about whom our account is written, was born to them, they rejoiced greatly at the birth of the child. And on that day, his parents celebrated the Eucharist on his behalf. And they made a great gathering and summoned all the priests and deacons of Alexandria, and treated them with great honour, food and drink, and everything that befits the priestly rank. And they brought the child, and blessed him, and called his name Yāret.

2. And when he was seven years old, his father brought him into the great school of Alexandria. And he began to study the whole ecclesiastical doctrine, and by his agility and sharpness of mind, he made to marvel all those who saw him. And when his teacher saw that the boy Yāret was adorned with such humbleness, and excellence of soul, and intelligence, he provided him with a cell in the school, and he rejoiced over him greatly and blessed him. And he sat in it by himself, learning and musing upon Holy Scriptures day and night. And he subdued his soul by fasting till evening, and by constant prayer, and by abstinence, and by sleeping upon the ground. And he gave to the poor all the delicacies that his parents would send to him. And from evening to evening he used to eat only a cake of dried bread. And cold water would never enter his cell, but he would drink warm water from a pitcher smeared with pitch. He used to keep vigils for the whole night long, while in the mornings he would go to write together with the students. (And) boys, his friends, would see his face and eyelids dripping with tears, and say, "What is it with you that you are weeping?" He then, while wearing a bright countenance, would say to them, "Because of the pain that afflicts my eyes, they are shedding tears."

3. And after he stayed in the school for the duration of eight years, and was instructed in all spiritual teaching, and the assiduous labour of vigils, fasting,

69 I.e., 192 CE.

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ראם לאיז. פעכה כהאי אינז לא לעמאכ זי אינז מ[a]מהר פון
מה מכאן: ום אינז מאנ זהר. אללן, מפוכהרה איזה. אללן אנאז
.מפוניפ לה פאם אכהלהר, פי אפוכאל אפוהכל לא: אהי אכהאן
אללן נו ום.אנזהר אינזה אינזר אנזאר מ אנאה אכהל ום איז
אנאז. מהאכה, מהכל יהאה. לאר אינזר מהכר מהיכר זהעהר
לי נזאר. אינז [c]אנר [b]אנאם אינז לאר אנר אכי אנ אינז קה
אפוניר אנאכר לפכה זהפה :אנר אנר אכהר נפכ. ר. לפוני נאפכר
,מאמיכר אהכר זהר. אינזהפכלר מיכה אזאר לפוני נאפם :אהכה
.מ איהאם הה :אפוניפכה מיכה אום נייפכהר לאה :נאנ אכי
:פוני אכהי אינזר אינזה אנאל לר.אהפי פוני אנ, זי אכי לאה
.נהכיר מהאכה נאנ פ[d]מאכה אנאנה. אהכזר אינזר צויפי אנאכר
אפוה לפוכל אהכה הם :פוני קה אנאכהלה ל פוני מהכר נאנ
:מאפיהר לה נאנ אכי אכהל [e]אהכר זהר. נפכי לה אללהר אכי
אינקרי.מהיכר אהאם קאפ. לאמיה לקפ לפוני אינה. אנפ. נאפכ פויי
אכאנה אינה אינה מ אהאפה ,מאמיכר [f]אהאפה.אינז קה לאר אכאנה
.נאנהאנה אינה אינה מ אהאפה. לאר יהכ אינז, יהי נאנהאנה לפוכה
נאפי אינפ לאהכה. אינז אפוניפ :נאנ קה פיז אכהל אהאפה
מהכר לפפי אל. אכאנה אפוה קאפ לפוני אנ אהפה. אנפיזהר, מאמיכר
אהאפה, מהפכה אכהל, מאמיכר, מהפהכה. אפוזה אכיפ לה זכי
.אהי אכהאה אפוניפ לפוהאם

נאם אהכר :אפוניהר מאנפה [g]אינזר פון אהאמהל פיז זה
4. אינאר פהכר אהפיר נזיפיהר זה :אנאמיר אנזר אנ פיז אכהל
לאה .זהאנ אינאר פהכר אכיפ ,אלל לאנה. לה לפאנ פהינה
.אנאר אינפ אהכר אינזר אנאל אנ אנאר אנאר אנאר אנאר אנאר
נאם אינז אנאר אנאר אנאר אנאר אנאר אנאר אנאר אנאר אנאר
183r .אהי אינפ לפוני אנר אנ :נאם פהכנר | אנפ פו זה זה. אנזה לפוני
לאר. נהכה פהכ אפוניפ אינז אכהל :אינה מיאם לה זכ זה
[j]:אנאמהאה [i]מאנפה נאם אינפהר אינזרי הזאנה פון אינ [h]מ

[a] B added on the margin, with the same hand. [b] B אנאמנ [c] B om [d] B + זהנ אפוניר
[e] B אהכר [f] B + נאם [g] B + פו [h] B om [i] B מאנרפוני [j] B אנאמהאה

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and prayer, it happened then that a certain monk from the monastery of Abba Pachomius, who was their relative, visited his father. And he wished to see the boy, and they sent and brought him. And when that monk saw him, he was greatly amazed by the divine grace that was shining upon his face. And that blessed man started to teach him the way of monks and the manner of life of saints. The boy then purposed in his mind that he would leave with the monk. And he said to his father and mother, "I want to leave with this monk to the monastery and to become a monk. If you would not allow me (to do that), I will throw myself into the sea, and Christ will exact satisfaction for my blood from you, and you will become a reproach in the whole Alexandria!" And when his parents heard these words, because they were excellent in all virtue, they answered him while saying, "Why, O my son, would you drown yourself! If you desire this monastic life, Christ will direct your course and strengthen you in all (things) which are pleasing to His name. As for us, whom you are leaving while cleaving to Christ,—He shall console our hearts and assuage sorrow for you in our souls." And when the blessed man heard these words of his parents, his soul exulted, and he rejoiced, and he blessed them and prayed for them. And he made up his mind that in the morning of the (next) day he will leave with the monk. And his parents rose and gave him hundreds of talents of gold for his needs in that monastery, where he was going. And they gave him garments to cover himself and another fifty talents as a gift to the monastery. And when the morning came, his parents went out in order to send him away, but he forbade them by the word of God to accompany him beyond the gate of the courtyard. And the parents of the blessed man embraced him and kissed him, and returned to their house in great sorrow and mourning.

4. And when he and the monk began to walk through the streets of the city, the blessed Yāret heard the voices of some foreigners, who were scourged with rods in prison, and they were very saddened. And he asked the prison guards and said, "Why are these foreigners being scourged?" And they answered him, "They are being scourged because money is demanded from them, and they have nothing to give." And immediately, he brought forth that gold, which his father gave him for his needs, and ransomed these prisoners and freed them. And when he saw that they were naked, he gave them the garments that his father gave him. And he set them free, and they departed. And when those who were present (there) saw (that), a great wonder seized them. And as they travelled putting their trust in the Lord, they arrived at the holy monastery of the followers of Pachomius. That monk, then, went and informed the head of the monastery, who was called John the Palestinian, about the boy. And he handed over to him that gift from his parents. And the head of the monastery rejoiced

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ולא יעבור ולא יעבור. ולא יעבור ולא יעבור ולא יעבור ולא יעבור
ולא יעבור ולא יעבור

over the coming of the boy and received him gladly. And they ordained him as a priest, and clothed him as a monk, and entrusted him with serving in the temple of the Lord. The holy Yāret then persisted in that divine service, while performing all other duties that are incumbent upon monks. He would keep vigil the whole night long while praying. And from Sunday to Sunday he would eat only one cake of bread. The blessed man remained in this service for three years.

5. And on one of the days, he went to one of the elders, whose name was Antonius the Egyptian. A great man of his times, he saw hidden things. And when the blessed Yāret came to him, he rejoiced over him and said to him, "Welcome, O servant of the king's son! Peace be upon you and upon that company, to which you are going to go. I am talking about the band of the elder Mār Awgēn, the greatest among the athletes. The one who once came to this monastery and performed here a miracle, when he cooled the oven that was raging with fire by his prayer, and entered and sat inside it as if on the cold ground. And he caused astonishment among all monks who were here, and many of them went with him to the Eastern region. And they established there a monastery on the mountain which is called Izla of Bēt Nahrīn, near the city of Nisibis." And when the boy heard about the amazing deeds of Mār Awgēn, he said to the elder, "Father, pray for me, for my wish is to go there." And the elder stretched his hand and blessed him, and said to him, "The God of your fathers will accompany you, and He will give you the strength to fulfill His wish. Amen."

6. And the blessed man went out from that holy elder while wondering about the words that he had heard from him. And he went to the head of the monastery and informed him about everything that the elder told him. And he said, "I want to go to the East." And when he (i.e., the abbot) heard these words from the boy, he became very saddened on account of his departure from them. And he said to him cheerfully, as a father to his son, "My son, wait until the great day of Sunday, then you will receive blessing from your blessed brothers and shall go in peace." And he followed the advice of the spiritual father. And when Sunday came, the blessed man began at the time of the holy mysteries[70] to go around between the rows of the brothers and to kiss them while saying, "My brothers, pray for me!" And that holy gathering was filled with sorrow and sadness on account of the blessed man's departure from them. And all of them answered in one voice, saying in weeping and tears, "Our brother, go in peace and pray

70 I.e., Eucharist.

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ציהו: ואיר סחרה[b] אחולי, ואחוה. ואכלו אחמה[a] ואיכאיר זה. אלי
ואחרה לאחיהם.

7. בה. אין אחד, ואכלה אויה אכלה: ואחוהלה בה אחם אין זה
אחם יהוה אין אחם אחה. אחה, אם אכיי אחמרה אכלה. אללו
אויה אחלה אכלה אחמה. אין אכלה אחמה. אויה אחמה אכלה זה
לה אחמה אכלה אחמה אחה אחה. אחה אחה אחה אחה אחה אחה
אחה אחה אחה אחה אחה אחה אחה

for us!" And when the blessed man received the blessing from them, they dismissed him with prayers. And he departed from them and directed his course to the East.

7. And as he was travelling alone, the Lord's angel holding a fiery sword was going in front of him. And he came to Ḥarran and saw that it was struck by the plague of youth so that corpses were lying in the streets and there was no one to bury them. And the illustrious man said to the inhabitants of Ḥarran, "If you confess the true God, and His son Jesus Christ, and His Living and Holy Spirit, I will drive out the plague from your children." And they promised him, "If you do that, we shall believe in your God and obey your commandments." And the illustrious man knelt and prayed to God in front of them. And at once, He removed the plague from them, and the destroying angel was withheld from the children of the inhabitants of Ḥarran. And when they saw this miracle, performed through the holy man, many of them believed in Our Lord. And he departed from them and went on his way. And multitudes of sick people went after him, and he healed them.

8. And that angel was accompanying him until he reached the city of Dara. And when he entered through the city gate, he saw a woman who was tormented by seven demons, and she was wounding everyone who was passing on the street with stones. And the city was in great vexation because of her. And when they saw the holy man walking around there, they told him, "Go back, O boy, lest this woman hurls stones at you!" And when the boy heard these words, he directed his course to that woman. And when she saw the holy man, she started to hurl stones at him. And not even a single piece of rock would hit him, but the angel that was with him was protecting him. And he came closer to that woman, and the demons began to shout through her mouth, saying, "Woe to us because of you, O son of Mary, and because of your disciple! We are those seven, whom you had expelled from Mary,[71] and now this Alexandrian is expelling and chasing us away from our dwelling by your name!" And the whole city gathered to see the miracle. The holy man then opened his mouth and spoke to the demons, saying, "By the power of God, your destroyer, I adjure you that you may not stay in this wretched body even for one (more) hour! But go out of her—in a bodily form, in front of the whole gathering that is standing here, and may you never have power over her again." And when they have heard the name of Christ, they

71 I.e., Mary Magdalene. Cf. Lk 8:2.

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ܐܝܟ ܕܠܐ ܐܡܪ ܐܢܫ ܠܚܒܪܗ ܪܝܩܐ ܐܘ ܣܟܠܐ ܐܘ ܚܣܪ ܥܩܠ ܐܘ ܕܡܐ ܐܘ ܕܒܪ ܐܢܫ ܐܘ ܕܒܪ ܒܗܝܡܬܐ ܐܘ ܕܒܪ ܥܒܕ ܐܘ ܕܒܪ ܐܡܬܐ ܐܘ ܕܒܪ ܚܪ ܐܘ ܕܒܪ ܢܟܪܝܐ ܐܘ ܕܒܪ ܚܪܬܐ ܐܘ ܕܒܪ ܐܬܢܬܐ ܐܘ ܕܒܪ ܒܝܬ ܐܘ ܕܒܪ ܚܨܝܪ ܐܘ ܕܒܪ ܒܝܬ ܒܪ ܐܘ ܕܒܪ ܒܝܬ ܒܪ ܐܘ ܕܒܪ ܒܝܬ ܒ

at once threw that woman upon the ground and went out of her, all seven of them, one after another, in the form of hideous Ethiopians. And they passed through the middle of the city before the eyes of all people and appeared no more. And that woman stood up while cured. And a great wonder seized all those who saw (it), and they praised God, who gave such power to holy men. And he also healed many thousands of people afflicted by all kinds of illnesses and expelled countless demons.

9. And he went out from the city of Dara and reached the citadel of Sarga.[72] And as the blessed man was sitting in the shadow of the citadel, a certain woman went out. And she looked at him lasciviously and said to him, "Where are you coming from, O man, being so afflicted and weary?" The blessed man then said to her, "Bring me water to drink." The foolish one then said to him, "How do you dare to speak to me, when no man ever saw me and dared to speak to me!" Cheerful, he answered and said to her, "During this night, O foolish one, two young men were with you in your bed, and now, lo—three others are in your house. How is it that I may not speak to you?" And when that young woman heard these words from the holy man, she became very afraid. And she entered the citadel and informed all those who were in it, "Go out and behold the man, who knows hidden things!" And when the rulers of the citadel heard (that), they went out toward the blessed man. And many sick people approached him, and he healed them by the power of Christ. And that woman also fell down at his feet, and entreated him earnestly about the struggle of fornication that she endured. And the holy man prayed for her and that struggle was removed from her, and she did not commit evil deeds anymore.

10. And the holy man rose from there and went on as far as Nisibis.[73] And Mār Jacob, the holy bishop of Nisibis, had passed away at that time. And the remnant was without a shepherd, and the holy Church—without a leader. And all the Christians that were there were in grief because, after the death of Mār Jacob, some wicked people from among the Jews rose against them and spoke against them to Warāz-Mihr, the commander of the Persians,[74] "These Chris-

72 I.e., *Ḥesnā d-Sargā*. The exact location of this settlement is not clear. Perhaps, it should be identified with *Sarǧa* of Arabic sources, located on the Euphrates in the vicinity of Samosata; see K.-P. Todt, and B.A. Vest, *Syria* (*Syria Prōtē, Syria Deuteria, Syria Euphratēsia*). 3 vols. (Denkschriften der philosophisch-historischen Klasse 438, Tabula Imperii Byzantini 15.1–3; Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014), 2:1701.

73 For a detailed discussion of the whole anti-Jewish episode in Sections 10–13, see Minov, "Jews and Christians."

74 On this figure, see Minov, "Jews and Christians," 481–486.

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ואיך אבוה לא שלמיה מלמא. אשתיה אלא הי ואמטאיתה
אדם ומאחוי איכו הי. פיאמחאיה אבוה מיכאל אלא מאי. אשלמיה
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אכי אחאיה:

ואיהי אלאחוי: אשתי לא מלא אלאי אחאי ואמטאיתה אחאי אחא. 11
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[a]B + אי [b]B אלאי [c]B אאאאאי [d]B אאאאאי [e]B אאי [f]B אאאאאי [g]B + אאי [h]B אאי [i]B + אאי אאאי אאי [j]B אאאי [k]B אאיאי [l]B אלאי

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tians are a deceitful people. And the one whom they worship and in whom they boast was the son of a carpenter, and our fathers crucified him in Jerusalem. And they say that the dead are raised in his name—one who has not saved himself from death! And now, let your lordship order that all the elders of the Christians be gathered. And if it is (indeed) that the dead are raised in the name of him, whom our fathers crucified in Jerusalem, let it be known to your majesty that they are trustworthy, and if not, it will be known to you that they are deceitful."

11. And when the iniquitous Warāz-Mihr heard these words from the Jews, he became greatly enraged against the Christians. And he sent to the chiefs of the city, saying, "In the morning all of you should come before me. And if you will not demonstrate me in deed some of what is written about (this) Messiah of yours, I will blot out the nation of Christians from the whole realm of the Persians." And the believers, upon hearing these (words), were in great fear. And on the morrow, all of them gathered in the church in order to consider what to do, and there was great discord among them. The illustrious Mār Yāret, however, was inside, praying in front of the sanctuary of the bones of the blessed Mār Jacob. And having heard the clamour in the nave, the blessed man went out to see what that commotion was. And when the blessed one went out to the believers, his countenance was shining like that of an angel of God. And he answered and said to them, "My brothers, what is the matter with you?" And having looked at him, they were amazed at his glorious countenance and at the grace of God that rested upon him. And they informed him about the reason of their strife. Full of cheer, he then said to them, "Come, let us go to that wicked one, trusting in the mercy of Christ, who will not leave us orphans!"

12. And the believers stood up together with the illustrious man, and they went to the court of the commander. And the guards entered and informed him about them. And the wicked one ordered and brought them in before the king. And he looked with rage at the holy Mār Yāret, and said to him, "And you, where are you from?" The illustrious man said to him, "I am a man from Alexandria, and truly I am a monk, and I worship Christ, the one whom the Jews crucified in Jerusalem, (and) the one by whose name all miracles are performed." The lawless one said to him, "And will you now perform miracles by his name?" The athlete said to him, "Christ gives signs to those who believe. How do you, who do not believe in his name, seek signs from him?!" At that time, the whole city

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ראיה. ראובן אשר לו זה ראיה. שמעון שלח לכאן פתקתו ביום שמעון שלח יום ראשון. שכן ילמד שיעור ד פעם ראשון ש[ל] ד"ר: זה פעם ראשונה שראיתי שמעון. ראלף שלח שאלותיהם בדבר שיעור הבית ראיה ראיונות. ראפיק ראלפר שלח שאלותיהם בדבר שיעור הבית ראיון ראשון. ראלף ראיתי שמעון, שהיה ראשון בתור, ראשון בשורה. ראיתי לראובן שאין שמעון שלח לכאן פתקתו ביום ראשון. שכן ילמד שיעור ד פעם ראשון ש[ל] ד"ר: זה פעם ראשונה שראיתי שמעון. ראלף שלח שאלותיהם בדבר שיעור הבית ראיון ראשון. ראלף ראיתי שמעון, שהיה ראשון בתור, ראשון בשורה. ראיתי לראובן שאין

[a]ראשית לפני שנוכל ראלף, שהיה ראשון בתור, ראשון בשורה. ראיתי שמעון, שהיה ראשון בתור, ראשון בשורה. ראיתי לראובן שאין שמעון שלח לכאן פתקתו ביום ראשון. שכן ילמד שיעור ד פעם ראשון ש[ל] ד"ר: זה פעם ראשונה שראיתי שמעון. ראלף שלח שאלותיהם בדבר שיעור הבית ראיון ראשון. ראלף ראיתי שמעון, שהיה ראשון בתור, ראשון בשורה. ראיתי לראובן שאין

ראשון ראיה ראיון ראשונה זיל שראה פעם ראשון שנתן שיעור 13. ראשון שנה. ראלף ראיתי שמעון, שהיה ראשון בתור, ראשון בשורה. ראיתי לראובן שאין שמעון שלח לכאן פתקתו ביום ראשון. שכן ילמד שיעור ד פעם ראשון ש[ל] ד"ר: זה פעם ראשונה שראיתי שמעון. ראלף שלח שאלותיהם בדבר שיעור הבית ראיון ראשון. ראלף ראיתי שמעון, שהיה ראשון בתור, ראשון בשורה. ראיתי לראובן שאין

[a] B + שנה

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was gathered there. And the commander said to the holy man, "I have an only son, and I have got no other besides him. And behold, his whole body is white as snow from leprosy. Know that if you heal him by the name of your lord, I will exalt your fellow believers through the whole dominion of the Persians, and they will be held in great honour by me!" The holy man then answered and said to him, "Bring your son here." And he ordered this immediately, and they brought his son before the blessed one. And he took off his (i.e., boy's) garments in front of all who were gathered, and he gave the order, and they brought him a cup of water. And the holy man said, "Christ, Son of the living God, whom the Jews crucified in Jerusalem, purify this servant of yours from this sickness of leprosy, so that the infidels may see and believe that you are truly the Messiah, who came to the world." And he took the cup in his hand and made a sign of the cross over it, and anointed his whole body, and at that very moment, the boy was purified. And there was a great joy for the father of the boy and for all who were present there.

13. And by God's will, the leader of the synagogue of the Jews had a son, whose name was Kūndeš, and he had already been ill for some time. And at this time, he died, and the commander has been informed of the death of that child. And the commander ordered him to be brought before him. And when they brought the boy into their midst, the holy man stood up at once, and kneeled and prayed, and said, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, the one whom the Jews crucified in Jerusalem! Just as you resurrected Lazarus when he was already stinking, and, again, the daughter of the leader of the synagogue,[75] so now, Lord, hear the prayer of your sinful servant and resurrect this servant of yours, so that these infidels would see and know that you are Messiah, Son of God, who came to the world!" And with this prayer of the blessed one, he went up and stood above the head of the boy, and said in the sight of all who were gathered: "Kūndeš, Kūndeš, by the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the one whom the Jews crucified in Jerusalem, arise!" And immediately, the boy jumped up and sat up while rubbing his face as someone who woke up from sleep for no reason. And when this multitude of people, who were standing (there), saw the miracle that Our Lord performed through the hands of the blessed one, they cried aloud, saying, "Glory to the Messiah of the Christians in whose name the dead are resurrected!" And when the commander saw this miracle, he greatly rejoiced. And at that very moment, he ordered that the accursed Jews should die by the

75 I.e., the daughter of Jairus (Mk 5:22–43; Lk 8:41–56).

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ܟܬ ܪܝܫܐ. ܡܫܚܠܦܝܢ ܫܬܝܢ ܠܚܡ ܥܝܢܐ ܘܡܝܢ ܡܫܠܡܐ ܥܠ ܒܝܬ ܡܕܒܚܐ. ܐܦ ܥܠ ܦܝ ܕܐܡܪ ܒܝܬ ܡܠܟ. ܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܕܒܚ ܠܐ ܡܐܟܠ ܐܠܐ ܟܗܢ. ܘ

blade of the sword. And the cruel executioners went out and began to massacre he sons of the crucifying (synagogue), young and old, until no one remained, except an accidental survivor who escaped being found out. And the number of the killed, men, women and children, was 83,000. And Christianity rose to high honour in the eyes of the military commander and the whole kingdom of the Persians. And the blessed man blessed the commander and the Great King of the Persians, and he commanded him and admonished him[76] regarding the nation of Christians.

14. And the holy man went out from the city of Nisibis and went up as far as the Mountain ⟨of the Second Sinai⟩,[77] where the monastery of the illustrious Mār Awgēn is. And at that time, the illustrious elder has already deceased. And his sons were without a head and a leader. And when the blessed Mār Yāret went up to the monastery of the holy Mār Awgēn, he entered the church and the martyrion. And he prostrated himself at the feet of the holy Mār Awgēn, where his bones were placed. At once, he sat in one of the corners of the martyrion until the time of liturgy. And the blessed men began to come to the liturgy, and they were entering in groups to receive blessing from the bones of their spiritual father. And the blessed man was seeing them as pillars of light, and he became overtaken by wonder and fear. And when the time came for a sacristan to set things in order, he entered the martyrion in order to lock the door. And he looked and saw the blessed man, sitting in the corner, and the angel of God, holding a fiery rod and standing above him. And sweet fragrance was blowing over the whole martyrion. And his name was Išoʿdad the Arabian, and he was a remarkable man of his times. And when he looked and saw that unspeakable light, he approached and fell down at the feet of Mār Yāret. And he said, "Bless me, my lord, and forgive me, and pray for me! And tell me—are you that Mār Yāret the Alexandrian, about whom we heard?" And when Mār Yāret heard these words from that sacristan, he moved towards him and embraced him affectionately, and said to him, "It is indeed me, Yāret, foreigner[78] and sinner."

76 Presumably, it is the king who commands and admonishes the commander.

77 The reading ܛܘܪܐ of Damas, Patriarcat syr. 12/17 does not make much sense in this context. I prefer, instead, the variant ܛܘܪ ܣܝܢܝ, found in most of East Syrian mss., including Cambridge Add. 2020. Some mss., such as Jerusalem, Saint Mark's Monastery 202, have ܐܝܙܠܐ, "of Izla."

78 Or "stranger."

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15. ראובן שמעון ראובן לוי: ראובן שמעון שמעון לוי ראובן שמעון.
לוי ראובן. ראובן שמעון ראובן לוי שמעון לוי. ראובן לוי שמעון ראובן
שמעון לוי ראובן. ראובן שמעון לוי ראובן לוי שמעון: ראובן שמעון לוי
ראובן לוי שמעון. ראובן שמעון לוי ראובן לוי שמעון ראובן שמעון לוי
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לוי שמעון ראובן

15. There were in the martyrion many people bound with chains, who were tormented by demons. And the holy man looked at them and said to the sacristan, "Come, brother, let us pray to Christ that He might drive the demons away from these wretched ones." The sacristan said to him, "These people are in such condition for three years already, and we were not able to heal them." The illustrious Yāret said to him, "Come, let us enter before the bones of your holy father and pray, so that Christ will, perhaps, have pity on these souls and save them from this hard affliction." And both illustrious men entered in front of the bones of the holy Mār Awgēn and prayed with one accord, saying, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, the hope of his associates, you Lord by your power drive the demons away from these people!" And as the holy men were praying, the voice of those demons grew stronger, so that the foundations of the church were shaken by the voice of the demons, who were going out in the form of dark fog, and like the sound of thunders and flashes of mighty lightnings. As they were going out one after another, they cried, saying, "Woe to us because of you, O Alexandrian! How long are you going to chase us! Where shall we flee from you, unless to a desolate desert, where no human dwells, according to the order of that Nazarene of yours!" And when the monks heard these frightening voices, they gathered and came from every side to see the miracle that had happened. And those people that were healed, each one of them went out and returned to his house, in good health and proclaiming the heroic deeds of the saint.

16. And all the brothers gathered and began to embrace and to kiss him joyously. And they were shouting, saying, "Come in peace, O chosen athlete of Christ, whom we were waiting to see!" And they received him joyously and gave him a cell above the church, and the blessed man settled there. And they appointed a brother, a valiant and God-fearing man, to serve him; his name was Quryaqos. And the blessed man dwelt in the cell, and he began spiritual worship: he would visit each among the elders and ask them about the monastic way of life; he would keep vigils for the whole night long; and during the daytime, he would carry around a pitcher on his shoulder and give water to drink to wayfarers. And he would eat merely a small cake of bread as his only nourishment from Sunday to Sunday.

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ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܐܝܟ ܐܡܪ ܐܢܬ ܕܐܢܐ ܐܬܐ ܠܟ ܘܐܢܬ ܐܙܠ ܠܐ ܬܬܐ ܠܝ ܐܠܐ ܐܢ ܐܙܠ ܐܢܐ ܐܫܕܪ ܠܟ ܠܦܪܩܠܝܛܐ ܘܐܢ ܐܙܠ ܐܢܐ ܐܫܕܪ ܠܟ ܠܦܪܩܠܝܛܐ ܐܬܐ ܬܬܐ ܠܝ ܐܠܐ

17. And when the inhabitants of the region and Maʿare heard the story of the holy man, every day sick and afflicted would come to him and get healed. On one of the days, some greeting women from the village of Maʿare came and told him about a certain woman named Saydū that she employs sorcery. "And, lo, she leads many astray after her. And from Wednesday to Wednesday she usually goes up to the top of the mountain and puts one of her legs to the East of the village and one to the West, and stays stretched out over the whole valley of the village, (so) that her (female) companions may see and receive her teaching. And we endured bitter reproof on her account." When the blessed man heard (that), he said to them, full of cheer, "On the night of the Wednesday, I will show you the defeat of that mad one." And when the evening of the Wednesday arrived, the blessed man stood up and went up secretly to (the place) above the village and hid under some rock. And Saydū the sorceress stood up and gathered her companions in the fourth hour of the night, and they stood in the middle of the village. And she ascended to the western mountain and set her foot to the eastern mountain, and her face was turned to the North, and her companions also stayed, while laughing and prattling. The holy Mār Yāret then stood up at once and forbade this foulness and said to her, "Saydū, I am binding you by the mighty command of Christ, so that until tomorrow neither you nor your companions, who might lead (people) astray instead of you, shall have power over what is beneath your place, until your wiles will be revealed in front of all the people. And demons, whom you worship, shall prevail over you and shall torture your limbs until the morning." And the wretched one desisted while having been enfeebled and suspended between heaven and earth. And the demons, whom they worshipped, were scourging them with cruel thongs from that same hour until the dawn shone forth. And the whole village was terrified by the cries of the mad ones, who were screaming and saying, "O, servant of Christ! Have mercy upon us and release us from the harsh menaces that you have decreed upon us!" And everyone woke up from his sleep and saw the derision of the mad ones, and this one stretched between heaven and earth, and her companions gazing at her with their hands bound. And when the dawn shone forth, all villagers from the surroundings gathered and saw them, the erring ones. And the holy man swore by Christ that he would not release them from this bondage until their sorceries and wiles were revealed before everyone. And one by one, each of them began to reveal him her artifices and sorceries. And he was writing them down upon the ground with his right thumb until he wrote down wiles of all of them. And when he effaced it and scattered that dust over all that ground, immediately all their wiles were blotted out from their minds. And then he released them, and they went to their homes in shame and great sadness, while our master returned to his cell.

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18. ובה יהודה. ובה יראל יחתו יחדיו מי ישם: לנה יהודה יחדיו
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19. יחזיק יחזיק יחזיק יחזיק יחזיק יחזיק יחזיק יחזיק יחזיק
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[a]B יראל [b]B ירחמל [c]B מחבר [d]B + גם לחכם

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18. And after a little time, an idea came to his mind to ascend to that holy mountain, where the ship, that is the Ark, rested in the days of the flood, the one known as "Mountain of the House of the Ark." And he informed his disciple Quryaqos about his idea, and he made up his mind to go with him. And on the day's morning, both blessed men arose and went on their way. And they came to the river Tigris in the days of Nisan and found it brimful from one bank to the other. And they could not find there a ship to cross (it), and there were no people in that place. And the holy man made a sign of the cross over them, and both of them crossed it as if over dry land. And after they ascended to the mountain, to the place of the Ark, and prayed there, they turned back and descended from the mountain. And they directed their course to the monastery of Mār Aḥā, the head of that spiritual band of the followers of the blessed Mār Awgēn.

19. And when they approached the ground beneath the monastery, they found there some ⟨cloister brothers⟩,[79] who were crying dolefully. And the illustrious Mār Yāret said to them, "Why are you weeping, my brothers?" Those men said to him, "A lioness came against us from this forest, and she savaged our friend and carried him to her den." And the illustrious man was very saddened, and he approached that place, and said in a loud voice, "O wicked beast, by the power of Jesus Christ, I order you to bring forth the body, while nothing being torn from it!" And at that same moment, the lioness came out, carrying that man, whom she savaged, while nothing was torn from him. And she hurled him in front of the illustrious man and returned to her den. And the blessed man looked at that man, all his bones savaged and his soul departed from him, and said to his friends, "What is his name?" They said to him, "His name is Mahdī."[80] The holy man then took him by his right hand, and called him, saying, "Mahdī,

79 The ms. reading ܨܒܨܦܟ, which does not make much sense in this context, should be emended to ܡܕܬܚܟ. Cf. the use of ܡܕܬܚܟ in a very similar account in the *Life of John of Nḥel*; ed. S.P. Brock, "John of Nḥel: An Episode in Early Seventh-Century Monastic History," *OLP* 9 (1978): 95–119, here 102, § 5.

80 This name poses certain difficulties. At first glance, it evokes the famous Arabic title *al-Mahdī*, "the rightly guided one" (a participial derivative of the root *hdy*), a honorific epithet, attested already during the Umayyad period, that was used to refer to "an expected ruler who would restore Islam to its original perfection"; W. Madelung, "al-Mahdī," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: New Edition*, ed. by H.A.R. Gibbs et al. 13 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960–2006), 5:1230–1238. One should take into consideration, however, that the cognate verbal root *hdy*, "to lead, direct" exists in Classical Syriac as well, and that the personal name "Mahdī" in the *Life* could, thus, be an independent Syriac formation from this root. In light of the absence of any explicit references to Islam in this episode and in the *Life* as a whole, as well as the fact that the bearer of this name was, apparently, Christian, the latter option seems more compelling.

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ܫܡܥ ܫܡܐ ܠܡܪܝ. ܠܡܢ ܕܝ ܡܝܬ ܝܬܪ. ܠܡܢ ܠܡܫܪ ܫܡܥ ܫܡܥ ܬܡܢ
ܒܝܬ. ܡܪܝܡ ܗ ܡܪܡܐ, ܩܡ ܚܒܝܒܬ ܡܠܟ ܡܪܚܒܝܠ ܡܫܡ[a]. ܡܪܡܐ
.ܡܝܐ ܕܐ ܡܫܡ ܠܝܡ ·ܠܡܪܡܪ. ܕܝ ܡܝܬ ܫܡ ܡܪܚܒ

ܠܡܪ ܡ ܫܡܐ. ܫܡ ܝܬ ܫܡܐ ܡܝܡܪ ܫܡܐ ܠܡܐ ܡܡܪ ܡ.20
ܦܢܝܢ ܫܡܠܟ ܗ, ܝܬ ܫܡܐ ܠܐ ܡܪ. ܡܡ, ܡܡܪ ܫܝ
ܩܡ ܠܡܪ. ܡܐ ܐܡ ܡܫ ܡܡ ܐܡܪ ܫܡܐ ·ܠܡ
ܡ ܝܬ ·ܩܡ ܗ ܡ ܡ ·ܡ ܐܡ ܡ ܫܝ ·ܡ ܐ
ܗ[b].ܫܡܐ ܫܡ ܡ ܝܬ ·ܡ ܐ ܡ ܫ ·ܡ
.ܡ ·ܡ ܐ ܡ ·ܡ ·ܡ ·

Mahdī, by the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, regain (your) health and stand up!" And that man leapt up and stood up. And the holy man took the oil of prayer and anointed those places, which were gnawed by that evil beast. And at that same moment, that man came to life and was healed, and he went to his house rejoicing.

20. And then the blessed men ascended to the holy monastery of Mār Aḥā, whose founder was yet alive at that time. And when the blessed Mār Yāret and his disciple Quryaqos entered and prayed, the priest, who was performing service inside, came out to them. And he took the blessed men and led them to his cell.[81] And as they sat there, enjoying the company of each other and making themselves familiar with each other, the priest said to the holy man, "Is there in your monastery, O our master, a chastisement like this one that we have got?" The illustrious man said to him, "What is this chastisement?" The priest said, "On the nights of gathering, a great dragon comes out from underneath the church, and terrifies the assembly, and scatters the brothers, who flee from the breath of its mouth, and does not allow us to pray." The blessed man said to him, "Do me a kindness and show me that place, from which the dragon comes out." And the priest followed him from afar, while trembling, and showed the holy man the place of that dragon. And brothers of that place gathered and said to the blessed man, "Keep yourself away from there, our master, lest it comes out and destroys you by the breath of its mouth!" And the blessed man approached the dragon's lair confidently, and said thus to it, "By that word, which bound you in Eden, and made you creep upon the ground, and gave you dust as your nourishment for all the days of your life,[82] I adjure you—come out here!" And when that dragon heard the word of the illustrious man, it began to creep and came outside. And the holy man approached it, and struck it with his staff, and said, "By the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, be torn in two!" And the tip of the holy man's staff struck the lower jaw of the dragon, and all at once that dragon was torn in two—from its head up to its tail, and it died at that very time. The holy Mār Aḥā at that time was on the Mountain of Qūraḥ. And when the inhabitants of the monastery saw this miracle, all of them descended and fell down at his feet, while kissing the holy man affectionately. And they were persuading him to stay with them.

81 Or "hut."

82 Cf. Gen 3:14.

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21. ܐܡܪ ܡܪܕܟܝ ܐܝܟ ܐܡܪ ܐܢ ܡܬܝܢ ܐܝܟܐ ܕܐܡܬ ܐ ܐܝ ܐܡܪ
ܐܠܐ ܐܡܪ ܐܡܪ ܐܢ ܐ ܐܝܟܐ ܐܡܪ ܐ. ܐܡܪ ܐܝܟ ܐܠܐ ܐ
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21. One of them then answered and said, "Perhaps, through this one the inhabitants of Ragūlū of Bēt ʿArbāyē will be converted, the ones whom no holy man was able to turn away from the hardness of their hearts and the harshness of their souls." And when the holy man heard the words of that brother, he remained silent. And he and his disciple Quryaqos passed the night there. And on the day's morning, both of them descended together from the monastery up to the river Tigris and crossed (it) in the same manner, (walking) on the water. And they directed their course to the region of Bēt ʿArbāyē. And the blessed Mār Yāret said to his disciple, "Go on, my son, let us walk to this Ragūlū, mentioned by that brother, and let us give our lives to Christ for its inhabitants! Perhaps, he will convert them through us." His disciple said to him, "Do as you wish, my lord." And as they travelled, they arrived at the Mountain of Pardūn.[83] And robbers with unsheathed swords and bows and arrows came out against them, to destroy them. And the disciple of the blessed man became frightened by the robbers, and said to the illustrious man, "What are we going to do?" And at that same moment, the robbers were stricken with blindness, and they were not able to pursue them.

22. And the illustrious men descended from the mountain and proceeded as far as the village of Ragūlū in Bēt ʿArbāyē. And it was very devoted to Magianism and the foul teaching of idols. And when the holy man entered the village, there was a great house of idols in the middle of it, in which there were thirty-two images and many priests, who served them.[84] And when the holy man reached the house of idols, he found there a certain old man from the village inhabitants, who was praying together with his sons. The blessed man said to him, "Man, who are these?" The old man said to him, "They are the gods, whom all kings of the earth worship." The blessed man said to him, "God forbid that the believing kings should worship statues!" And, immediately, the holy man arose

83 According to Išōʿdnaḥ of Baṣra (*Book of Chastity* 51), the "Mountain of Pardūn" (ܛܘܪ ܦܪܕܘܢ), identified also as Qartā (ܩܪܛܐ), is located "on the border of (Bēt) Zabdāyē and (Bēt) ʿArbāyē" (ܒܬܪ ܬܚܘܡ ܙܒܕܝ ܘܒܬ ܥܪܒܝܐ); ed. Chabot, "Le Livre de la chasteté," 32. Jean Maurice Fiey suggests that it might be identified with the modern mountain Lailak/Leilak Dagh, located southwest of the modern city of Cizre (medieval Jazīrat Ibn ʿUmar); see Fiey, *Nisibe*, 171, n. 55.

84 It is unclear whether this description reflects reality of Zoroastrian shrines or is merely a literary *topos*, indebted to the earlier Western Christian tradition of representation of "pagan" cultic places. For a discussion of the use of figural art in Zoroastrian cult, see M. Boyce, "Iconoclasm among the Zoroastrians," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, ed. by J. Neusner. 4 vols. (Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 12; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 4:93–111; M. Shenkar, "Rethinking Sasanian Iconoclasm," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 135.3 (2015): 471–498.

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ולבנו ׃ויהיתה לאשתה לבד ואנוש לא משתרבים׃ויקח קינלת
׃ואשה אחד נפטר קינלת ואפרתיה׃ואחר מלאו ויהיתה לה

23. ואחר אם[1] אש יהד ׃יש ויהיתה[a] ויהיב ואם ,ומהתה יהיו ׃ואחר יהיו לה׃ אחד ואחר ויהיתה[b] ׃ואשתה ויהיתה לבד ואם ואחר יהד׃ואחר תה ואשתה ואחר יהיו ׃ויהיתה תה ואשתה ואחר

and prayed in front of the idols. And they fell upon the priests and killed them, and the statues were broken to pieces and turned into dust.

23. And when the man saw that miracle, he became enraged. And he sent his servants, and they called all the inhabitants of the village. And when they came and saw the images crushed, and the killed priest scattered around, they beat the holy man and his disciple mercilessly, while saying, "From where this sorcerer, who breaks gods and kills priests, came upon us?!" And they sent and kindled a furnace with strong fire. And they dragged the holy man and his disciple and threw them into it. And when the holy men fell into the flame, the fire was suddenly quenched and vanished, and the furnace became as if no fire was burning in it at all. And when these unbelievers saw (that), they went down and raised the holy man and his disciple from the furnace. And they answered and said to him, "Who are you, and from which land are you, and by which authority you do these (things)?" The blessed man said to them, "I am from Alexandria, and I am Christian, and I worship the living God, and His Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and his living, holy and life-giving Spirit,—the One who created heaven and earth, and angels and humans, and the sun and the moon and stars, and fire, and water, and trees, and creeping things, and birds and flying creatures, and animals. And He has power over everything, and by his name the dead arise, and the sick are healed, and lepers are cleansed, and the blind see. And it is only Him that angels and humans worship, and He is the lord of heaven and earth." The unbelievers say to him, "So, you are like these Christians, 'sons of baptism,' who are (found) in this land?" The holy man said to them, "Yes." The pagans say to him, "But these are not able to do the things like you do." The holy man said to them, "These are drowned in worldly toils, but we, called 'monks,' are disciples of Christ, and He grants us everything that we ask from Him."

24. The Magians say to him, "Now, if you will raise by the name of your Christ these priests, who were killed and died, we will believe in Him, and we will get baptized in His name, and we will become Christians." And, immediately, the blessed man arose and came to the gate of that house of idols. And he kneeled in the gate, and prayed, and said, "Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who performs might works through his servants and shows miracles in his worshippers, you, Lord, by your mighty power raise these souls from destruction, so that these foul Magians might see and believe that you are the Messiah, Son of God, who came to the world!" And when he completed his prayer, he spread

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ולא יכלו לו. ואמר אל אחיו הלא ידעתם כי הגבירה ישנה עמנו בבית. ועתה הביאו לי אותו ואראה אם כן הוא כאשר אמרתם. ויעש כן. ויבא יוסף אל הגבירה ויאמר לה הנה אחיך הגדול בא אלי. ותאמר הגבירה אל יוסף. אל תדבר אלי כן. כי אחי הוא ואמי ילדה אותו. ויוסף אמר אליה.

his hands up to heaven and directed his gaze to these killed men. And he said, "By the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, arise, priests!" And, immediately, these men leapt up and arose, as if from sleep, while crying out and saying, "Great is the god of this man, and there is no other god like him!" These priests were fourteen in number. And when the Magians saw this miracle, all of them believed. And they set up there a font for baptism, and he baptized them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And he turned the inhabitants of Ragūlū to the knowledge of the truth. And they built for the blessed man a large monastery at the place of that house of idols and surrounded it by a mighty wall. And they dug there a water well, and provided everything that is necessary for the monastery, and built in it a magnificent church. And he dwelt in this monastery, together with his disciple Quryaqos.

25. And his fame spread through the whole (region of) Bēt ʿArbāyē and the regions that surround it. And every day thousands of people from everywhere were visiting him, some of whom were afflicted by demons and by all sorts of various illnesses. And by the power of God, he was healing everyone, through the word. On one of the days, Satan, in his bitter envy toward the people of Ragūlū, stirred up a great evil and caused great bloodshed among them. And they began slaying each other with the edge of a sword. And some people among them ran and informed the holy man. And, immediately, he and his disciple went out and came to them. And when they saw the holy man, they stopped slaying[85] each other. And the blessed man restrained Satan from their midst, and he had no more power over them. As for those among them who were wounded,—he brought forth the oil of prayer and anointed their wounds. And he restored[86] them and made peace between them, and returned to his monastery.

26. And on the day's morning, the wife of Hūrmazd from the village of Bēt Qadeš came to him, who had a pain in her right side. And, immediately, he signed her with the sign of the Cross, and she was healed. And, again, Rūzāmīhōr from the village of Barqayṭā came to him, together with his son, whose face was turned backwards. And immediately, the blessed man looked at him and signed him with the sign of the Cross, and he regained his health. And again, a believing ruler from the village of Tayūmtah came to him, together with his daughter, who was tortured by a demon. And the blessed man removed this

85 The form ܠܡܚܣ, found in both D and B, seems to be a corruption of ܠܡܚܣܢ, attested in several other mss.

86 The reading of B "healed" might be original.

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ܟܬܒ ܫܡܗ ܕܫܡܫ ܐܬ ܒܪܫܝܬ ׃ ܒܪܐ ܫܡܝܢ ܘܐܬ ܐܪܥܐ ׃ ܘܐܪܥ
ܗܘܬ ܬܗܘ ܥܠ ܦܢܝ ܬܗܘܡܐ ׃ ܘܪܘܚ ܐܠܗܝܡ ܡܪܚܦܬ ܥܠ ܦܢܝ
ܗܘ ܬܗܘ ׃ ܘܐܡܪ ܐܠܗܝܡ ܢܗܘܐ ܢܗܝܪܐ ׃ ܘܢܗܝܪ ܫܦܝܪ
ܛܒ ׃ ܘܐܦܪܫ ܐܠܗܝܡ ܒܝܢ ܢܗܝܪܐ ܘܒܝܢ ܚܫܘܟܐ ׃ ܘܩܪܐ
ܐܠܗܝܡ ׀ ܠܢܗܝܪܐ ܝܘܡ ׀ ܘܠܚܫܘܟܐ ܩܪܐ ׀ ܠܝܠܐ ׃ ܘܗܝܬ
ܥܪܒ ׃ ܘܗܝܬ ܒܩܪ ׃ ܝܘܡ ܐܚܕ ׃ ܘܐܡܪ ܐܠܗܝܡ ׀ ܢܗܘܐ ׀ ܪܩܝܥ
ܒܬܘܟ ׀ ܡܝܡ ׀ ܘܝܗܝ ׀ ܒܕܝܠ ׀ ܡܝܡ ׀ ܘܝܗܝ ׀ ܒܝܢ ׀ ܡܝܡ ׀ ܠܡܝܡ ׃
ܘܝܩܪܐ ׀ ܐܠܗܝܡ ׀ ܠܪܩܝܥ ׀ ܫܡܝܡ ׀ ׃ ܘܝܗܝ ׀ ܥܪܒ ׀ ׃ ܘܝܗܝ ׀ ܒܩܪ ׀
׃ ܝܘܡ ׀ ܬܪܝܢ ׀ ׃ ܘܐܡܪ ׀ ܐܠܗܝܡ ׀ ׃ ܢܗܘܐ ׀ ׃ ܪܩܝܥ ׀ ׃ ܒܬܘܟ ׀ ׃ ܡܝܡ ׀ ׃
׃ ܘܝܗܝ ׀ ׃ ܒܝܢ ׀ ׃ ܡܝܡ ׀ ׃ ׃ ׃

struggle from her, and she was healed. And again, a certain man from the village of Šapītbā, whom Satan struck on his pupils so that he became blind, came to him. And the holy man made the sign over his eyes, and he was healed. And again, Pandeš from Bārtā of Bēt ʿArbāyē, who was Magian, came to him. He was suffering from a stone in the bladder, and he came to the illustrious man together with his whole household. And he gave him *ḥnānā*[87] to drink, and he was healed. And he (i.e., Pandeš) approached and got baptized, together with his whole household, and they became Christians. And they settled near the blessed man, in the village of Ragūlū. And again, Mār Addai from the village of Bēt Addai, who was suffering from intestinal pain, came to the holy man. And the illustrious man made the sign of the Cross over his belly, and he was healed. Again, Daniel from the village of Bēt ʿAmar came to him, while a serpent was coiled around his neck, and he was close to death. And when the holy man saw him, he bound him by an oath and said, "I am saying to you, O accursed one, by the name of Our Lord, depart from this man and creep no more upon the earth!" And immediately, the serpent departed from this man and died. And again, people from the village of Sūrbād came to him, who were suffering from an inflammation of the skin, which was torn in shreds. And the holy man prayed for them and washed them, and they were healed. And God performed numerous miracles through the holy Mār Yāret, which we do not have the power to write down. As for that which we have written above, let it be for the remembrance and pride of the believers, and the glory of the Holy Trinity, and the edification of the apostolic Church.

27. And after the blessed man and his disciple stayed in the monastery for many years, while performing spiritual worship, the time arrived for him to depart from this transitory life. And when he knew in his soul that the time of his departure has arrived, while he had no pain or sickness, he sent his disciple to the village of Ragūlū. And he gathered all the venerable elders, and they came to the monastery of the blessed man. And they found him standing erect on a rush mat, with a censer of incense in front of him. And when they came to him, he ordered them to sit down. And he opened his mouth and blessed them and the whole village, and he also blessed the entire region. And he instructed them about the monastery and about everything that is in it. And he spread

87 Literally "grace"; a type of contact relic, made of dust taken from the tombs of saints or other holy places, mixed with blessed oil and/or water. See Ch. Jullien and F. Jullien, "Du *ḥnana* ou la bénédiction contestée," in *Sur les pas des Araméens chrétiens. Mélanges offerts à Alain Desreumaux*, ed. by F. Briquel Chatonnet and M. Debié (Cahiers d'études syriaques 1; Paris: Geuthner, 2010), 333–348.

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ראבי ראללה בילה ראבאב שבא. שמי אלאדא. ראבאל ,מאזר ראצה אזיאבאדא. ראבזה ראיאר מא באבאל. ראבוב מאבא ראבאבא ראזאבאבא [אב]ארא זיבאל אשא [a]אמאא ראצאצאבא ראבאה אבאשאב ,מאבאמא :ראצא ראיאבא ,מאבזבא.ראצא אשזי ראבשצאבא בא. אצאר בזאבא ראבאבא מצאבא :ראשזי אללה בי ראאמ. מזבי בא ,מאזבי ,בא מאא אי בא. אבאה זאבאבאשא מזבא מזבאלא בי אבאה ראבאלא מזאבאר בזאבא. ראצאר אבאשב אצא :ראבאבא ראבה אבאשב ראבאם בבא אזבאלא מא באבא.זבי בזאבא אזבאבא אללה ראאמא אמאא.אזאבא אש אבא אשזי אבילאבאי אאמזאב זבא אבא.מאבאמ מבאר ראבילא אאמבזיב באל :אאמ זמזבאבא ראבאב אשזי אבא אבאר אבא זבי אבא מאבאב זבא ראבזאבאי בזי ,זב אצאר זבאמא. אאמ אבאלאבאבא ראב אשאב ⟨אאשא⟩ אבאשב אאלאלא.⟨מאזבאב⟩ אצאר אאמבזיב זיב אשאב ⟨אאשא⟩ אבאשב אאלאלא. [b]אבאר אבאבי בבאל

[a]B ראבילא [b]B + ל אאמא מאבלא.ראזבאאבאר בזי ,זב אצאר ראבאבא בבאבא בבאבי אשאב בזאב בזיב

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his hands up to heaven and gave up his spirit. And at that same moment, a great wailing and weeping arose in the whole village, and it was heard through the entire region of (Bēt) ʿArbāyē. And many priests and all deacons gathered, and they accompanied the body of the holy man with psalms and hymns of the Holy Spirit. And they wrapped it with precious garments and placed it in the monastery's church. The crowning of the illustrious man, then, took place on the twenty-seventh (day) of the Former Tešrīn (i.e., October). His disciple then remained after him for fifteen days, with his eyes not ceasing from tears and weeping in front of the holy man's sepulcher. And afterwards, he fell sick for three days, and his crowning took place on the thirteenth (day) of the Latter Tešrīn (i.e., November). And they laid his disciple as well inside the church. And after the departure of the illustrious athletes from the transient life, all those who were afflicted by the evil spirits would come to the bones of the blessed men and be healed. And the holy Mār Yāret performed more miracles after his death than during his life. Glory to God, whose hidden power dwells in the saints' bones, for ever and ever, Amen. Completed is the account of the holy Mār Yāret the Alexandrian. Let his prayer be for us a wall of the place of refuge, Amen.

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Sigla and Abbreviations

AB	*Analecta Bollandiana*
AMS	P. Bedjan, *Acta martyrum et sanctorum*. 7 vols. (Paris–Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1890–1897)
ARCBH	S. Efthymiadis, ed., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*. 2 vols. (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2011, 2014)
BHG	F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca*. 3 vols. (Subsidia hagiographica 8a; 3rd ed.; Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1957); *Novum Auctarium*—F. Halkin, *Novum auctarium bibliothecae hagiographicae graecae* (Subsidia hagiographica 65; Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1984)
BHL	*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1898–1901, 1911, 1986)
BHO	P. Peeters, *Bibliotheca hagiographica orientalis* (Subsidia hagiographica 10; Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1910)
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
CHRC	*Church History and Religious Culture*
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
GEDSH	S.P. Brock, A.M. Butts, G.A. Kiraz, and L. van Rompay, eds., *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2011)
HE	*Historia Ecclesiastica*
JCSSS	*Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JS	P. Bedjan, *Homiliae selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*. 5 vols. (Paris–Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1905–1910)
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JThS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
NAS	Nikodemos Hagioreites, *Συναξαρίστης τῶν δώδεκα μηνῶν τοῦ ἐνιαύτου*, 3 vols. (Εν Βενετία: Εν τη Τυπογραφία Πάνου Θεοδοσίου του εξ Ιωαννίνων, 1819; repr. Αθήνα: Δόμος, 2005)
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OCP	*Orientalia Christiana Periodica*
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OLP	*Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
PO	*Patrologia Orientalis*
ROC	*Revue de l'Orient chrétien*

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SCp	H. Delehaye, *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi adiectis synaxariis selectis* (Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum, Novembris; Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1902)
SL	M. Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon: A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann's Lexicon Syriacum* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns / Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2009)
SP	*Studia Patristica*
Subs.	Subsidia
Syr.	Scriptores Syri
TSEC	Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*

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